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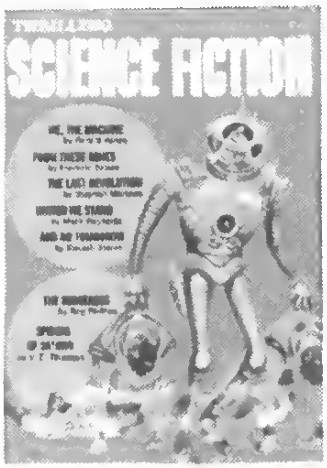
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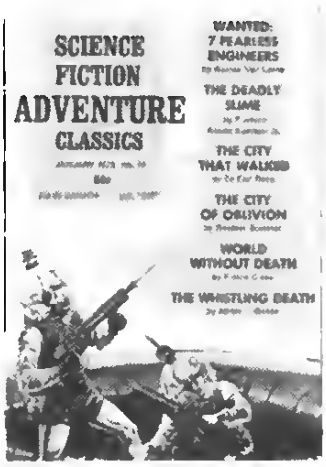
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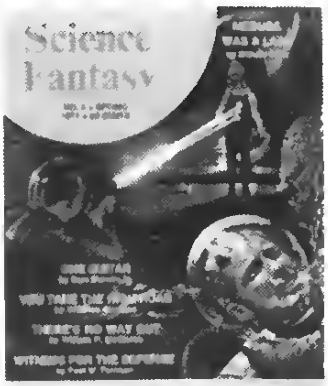
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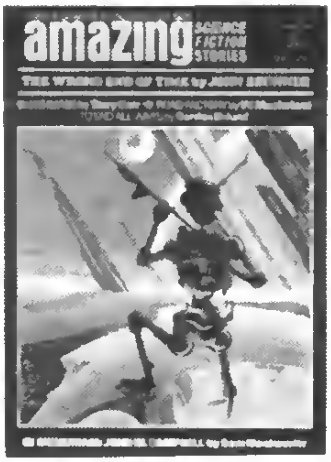
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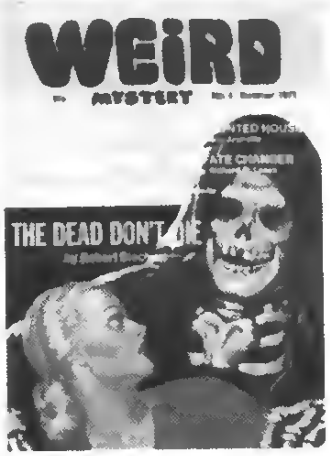
















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TED WHITE

editorial



This issue is, as I promised you, the Guilford Conference Writers Issue. But before telling you more about it, specifically, I'd like to discuss writers' conferences, workshops, and groups more generally.

A writers' group is formed, basically, when two or more writers or would-be writers get together. It doesn't really matter whether or not such a group is recognized as such or proclaimed a "writers' group"—the inevitability is that *any* two writers, thrown together socially, will, *by definition,* become such a group. It is a recognized Natural Law that writers, in the proximity of other writers (as well as at other times, on other occasions—indeed, upon almost *any* occasion) will talk about writing. Now, I've been hanging around this scene for almost twenty years, and I've not once observed an exception to this rule.

My own initiation into such things took place back in 1955, when I first met a fan named Larry Stark. Larry at that time wrote fiction about fandom—that is, he took social situations common to, or even unique in, science fiction fandom and he wrote stories about them. They weren't great shakes as Literature, but they stood out head and shoulders over the fiction printed in the fanzines of the time, most of which was very bad would-be science fiction. Larry had an interest in literature and in writing, and whenever he talked to another fan who had literary aspirations, he would talk about writers and writing. (His other major topic was jazz. I learned a great deal of the rudiments of music from Larry Stark.) I didn't have much in the way of literary asperations, but it was inevitable that when we spent a summer together, as we did a year later, Larry would try to drum a few essentials into my head. It was the one-eyed man leading the blind, of course, but from my ignorant point of view he was enormously well-informed, as well as being older than I. (I might add that I can recall no advice he gave me which didn't prove useful.)

We lost track of each other in the ensuing decade, but Larry sold a few stories—outside the sf market—in the early sixties, and has managed a Harvard Square bookshop most of the time since. We retain friends and acquaintances in common, one of whom told me, after my books began to come out, that Larry was terrifically proud of me. (So here's a bow in your direction in return, Larry. It took me a few years to find out what you were talking about, but you had the right ideas.)

By the early sixties, when I was writing for the jazz magazines and their like, I became part of another more or less informal writers' group, this one in the Village, in New York City. I owed a mimeo shop in which a great many fans congregated daily, and among these fans were people like Terry Carr and Lee Hoffman, who were to go on to distinguished careers as writers. At that point Lee was writing

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What do you think would happen if:

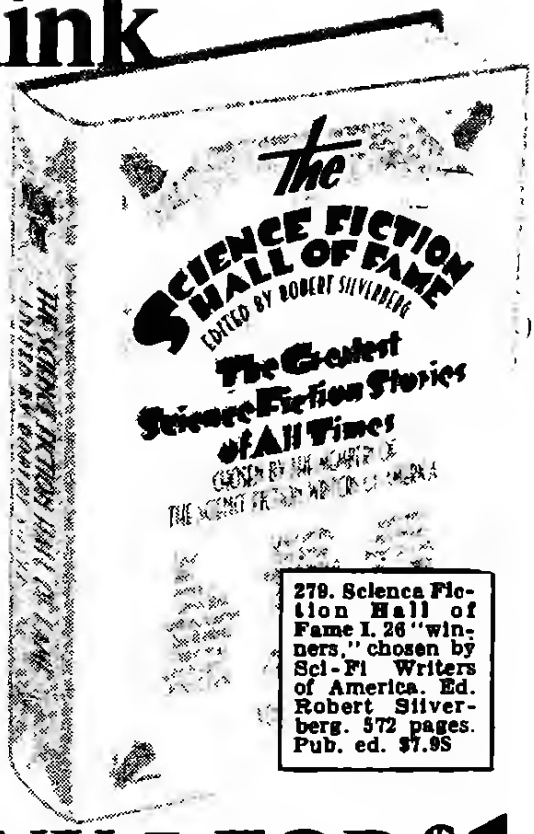
A group of workers controlling all the nation's transportation decided to strike?

A temperamental child could destroy anything displeasing him?

A key defense scientist became convinced man was no more than a high-class bacterium cultured by a superior life form?

Machines created to think like people developed people emotions?

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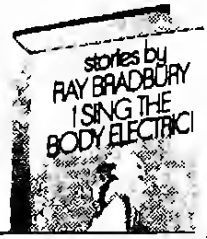
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Geo. Alec Effinger's first published story was "The Eight-Thirty to Nine Slot," in our April issue. Now he returns with a delightful tour-de-force in which we meet (and not for the last time) Rod Marquand . . . better known to the world at large as the superhero, The Iguana . . . as he battles—

THE AWESOME MENACE OF THE POLARIZER

GEO. ALEC EFFINGER

Illustrated by JEFF JONES

This is New Haven, Connecticut. It is a city not without its large share of New England charm, not without its proud heritage dating from more than a century before the American Revolution, a city not without . fear!

New Haven has a large and beautiful central green, with its three white, steepled churches. The Elm City is the home of Yale University and the world-famous Peabody Museum. It is the home of Robert W. Hanson, whose fate is inextricably bound to that of Rod Marquand, who, in his secret guise of The Iguana, is in actuality a super-powered battler against crime and iniquity.

What strange destinies have drawn these two men, so disparate in their goals and accomplishments, together in a weird struggle against the massed forces of evil? Let us go back in time, back just a few days, to New York City, to the office of the principal of a great metropolitan high school. . . .

"Rod, I'm going to send you to the dispensary, and then we'll send you home for the day. You're obviously in no condition to stay in school. While the nurse is looking at you, I'll call your parents and let them know that you're on your way. I wish you'd tell me what happened. You know, protecting whoever did this to you can only make things worse for yourself, and will end in the same thing happening to someone else. When it does, he may not get off as lightly as you."

Young Rod Marquand, straight-A scholar and star athlete, nodded silently. He couldn't tell Principal Woodcotte the truth: that during the lunch recess he had intercepted a call by Safety Director Madison and had hurried to a location on the far West Side. There, on the lonely rooftop of the riverfront warehouse, he had battled his oldest enemy, The Polarizer, whom Rod had believed to be still safely salted away in a Federal penitentiary.

The Polarizer had managed to develop a unique new weapon, an improvement on his earlier wrist-ionizer. Rod, The Iguana, had been defeated, although the Tactical Police Force arrived before The Polarizer could seriously injure him or, worse, remove his mask. After the battle, Rod returned to school to protect his normal identity. But he was wounded badly on the face and body, and still reeling from the effects of The Polarizer's de-molecularizer.

"Yes, sir. It was only some envious members of that Ethnic Group, out for some fun at my expense. I'm positive that they wouldn't bother someone less popular. Thank you for letting me go home; I don't feel very well right now. But when you talk to my parents, please don't tell them how badly I feel. They're both aged and infirm, and the worry might be bad for their health.

"Rod, you're amazing. You've just been roughed-up by a gang of young hoods, and you're concerned only with your parents' feelings. I certainly wish more of my students here were like you.

"May I go now, sir?"

"Certainly, Rod. Go down to see the nurse and she'll give you the yellow slip to go home. Here, let me write you a hall pass."



HANSON RODE HIS BICYCLE down the hill from the Chem Lab. It had rained during the afternoon and he discovered that his hand brakes wouldn't work. He built speed down the long hill, shooting past the Pregnant Oyster and through the light at Grove Street. He zipped around the corner and coasted by the cemetery.

He pedaled on for several blocks until

he came to the driveway of his apartment building. He parked the bike in the back, taking his lab manual and notebook out of the basket. They were spotted with water, soaked in stripes from the wet wire pannier.

Hanson walked around to the front of the building, in order to check his mailbox. There wasn't any mail, but he did see a small, shiny brass plaque screwed to the wall of the entry hall. He was certain that he had never seen one there before. It read:

THIS BUILDING
houses the apartment used by
ROBERT WAYNE HANSON
during his years at
Yale University
1966-1970

Hanson laughed to himself. "Those bastards at YBC, I'll bet," he thought. The idea struck him as pretty funny, although the engraved plaque must have cost someone a good bit. He took out his handkerchief and polished the metal. Still smiling, he went down the corridor to his rooms.

Inside, he put his books on his desk and stretched out on the couch. He had nothing to do until dinnertime, and he felt like taking a nap. He was startled to see that the Miro print that he had put on the living room wall above the couch was missing. In its place was another brass plaque, much larger than the other. This one said:

THIS ROOM
was the home of
ROBERT WAYNE HANSON
during the years
1966-1970

Hanson didn't laugh. The concept of the joke still amused him, but he was a little upset that someone had come into his apartment without his permission, removed his favorite print, and permanently mounted a large and altogether unattractive sign on his wall.

"That goddamn Benarcek and his preppie sense of humor. There'll probably be pig entrails in the bathtub." Hanson frowned and closed his eyes. He would put off thinking about the Miro print until he had a chance to talk to Justin and the rest of the clowns at the radio station.

ROD WORRIED ALL the way home on the subway. The Polarizer had beaten him badly, and, though the Crimemaster had been fooled by Rod's display of sheer will-power, Rod knew that he had nearly been killed. Only the fact that The Iguana's electromagnetic web-rope had jammed the de-molecularizer in time had saved Rod's life. But Rod was certain that The Polarizer would not be satisfied with a private victory; even now the King of Evil would be plotting an even more ignominious and public end of The Iguana. Rod was sure that an invitation to the trap would not be long in coming.

There was only one thing to do. He had to get help from someone. But who? Who was the leading physicist in the country? And, moreover, could Rod trust him with the secret of his dual identity? He couldn't face The Polarizer again without something to neutralize the effects of the Valence Wizard's uncanny weapons.

"Fortunately," Rod thought, "spring vacation begins tomorrow. I can get help and be back before school starts again. Also, fortunately, Dad is aware of my secret. He can make up some excuse for my absence that will satisfy Mom and the guys." Mr. Marquand had

dramatically discovered Rod's concealed role as The Iguana several weeks previously. Rod had just been severely beaten by Kobol, the cybernetic manthing programmed to pulverize Manhattan by Diabor The Devastator. Mr. Marquand came upon his son's twisted and inert body by accident that evening, as he walked along Bleecker Street. Many other passers-by had avoided the boy, but Mr. Marquand knelt and lifted off the fearsome mask. He gasped when he recognized his son, and, hailing a cab, took him home. He hid the costume of The Iguana to protect the already shattered nerves of his wife. Soon Rod's athletic young body recovered completely, in time to defeat Kobol and wreck the insane plans of Diabor The Devastator.

Safe in his family's Chelsea apartment, Rod studied the piles of scientific journals to which he subscribed. After much deliberation, he came to the conclusion that there was only one man who could possibly aid him in his effort to save humanity from the megalomaniac scheme of The Polarizer: Dr. Waters, head of the plasmonics department at Ivy University. Rod called the Port Authority information number, and prepared for his trip to New Aulis in the morning.

SPRING VACATION! Hanson was grateful down through his very bones. He hadn't needed a vacation this much in years. He had two long papers to write, but he already had them pretty well thought out, so that he could spend the time just lying around his parents' home in Cleveland.

His father met him at Hopkins Airport, asking him the same questions as always: how was he getting along, did he need anything, had he knocked up any Vassar girls ha ha. His mother would ask him about the food, of course. Everything was always the same, which is the reason that he wanted to come home for the rest.

Everything was always the same, except for the bronze inscription bolted to the porch of the house on E. 147th Street. Hanson dropped his suitcase when he saw it. He walked up to the porch and read it:

THIS HOUSE
was the birthplace of
ROBERT WAYNE HANSON
November 15, 1947

• • •

Marker donated by
The Cleveland Historical Society

"What's this, Dad? How long has this been here?"

"I don't know, Bobby. I never saw it before."

Hanson was getting confused. This was a bit too much for a silly joke by some of the guys at school. This unsightly testimonial on the front of his parents' house looked very expensive; when could it have been put there? Neither of his parents had ever seen it before, and were sure that no one had put it there that morning. Hanson idly wondered if there were a little marker now in the delivery room at St. Ann's Hospital.

On a whim he called the Cleveland Historical Society. A female voice answered his questions, and transferred him to the Bureau of Landmarks and Monuments. A helpful clerk in the department informed him that the plaque had been put on the house over eight years ago.

"But I was only twelve years old then," protested Hanson.

"Yes, sir. Our records show that the house at that address was declared a local landmark, and funds were appropriated for the plaque."

"In the first place, we've lived there for over twenty years, and we've never seen that thing before. And even if it were there, which is impossible, why would the Historical Society put up markers for me?"

"I don't understand, I'm afraid. We have the records right here in our files. You must have overlooked the plaque all this time. Perhaps it was behind a bush which you've recently removed."

"But it's for me! *I'm* Robert W. Hanson, and I haven't *done* anything!"

"What was that?"

"I said, *I'm* Robert Hanson."

The voice sounded annoyed and impatient. "I see. A joke. You're Robert Wayne Hanson. And I'm Margaret Chase Smith. Good afternoon."

"MR. MARQUAND?"

"Yes, sir?"

"I'm Dr. Waters. I hope your trip out from New York was pleasant."

"Yes, sir. Very much so. I caught up on some thin-film abstracts that I've been wanting to get to. I'd like to thank you for taking time out to see me. You have no idea how serious my problem is."

The physicist, surprisingly young and athletic for one of his intellectual attainments, smiled. "I'm always glad to help along a struggling scholar. Are you planning to apply to old Ivy?"

"Oh, I've already been accepted by Yale, Harvard, and Princeton," said Rod shyly, "but I think that I'm going to turn them all down and go to Cambridge. I'll get to do some travelling that way, too."

"Very interesting. Now, as to your problem . . ."

Rod nodded, rising and coming closer to Dr. Waters' desk.

"I must be sure, first of all," he said, "it is vital that we are completely alone. Is there any way for anyone to overhear our conversation?"

Dr. Waters looked amused. "This is somewhat more melodramatic than the usual confrontation with undergraduates. But, all right, just a moment." He pressed a button on the intercom on his desk. "Miss Clement, please see that we're not interrupted for any reason. Thank you."

"Fine," said Rod. "Now you will understand my need for secrecy. First, I must reveal to you that I am, in actuality, The Iguana."

"What!" exclaimed Dr. Waters. "You! A mere lad! If what you say is true, I'm utterly amazed. From the motion pictures I had estimated that The Iguana must be a marvelously trained adult with years of academic and athletic experience behind him."

Rod opened his suitcase, removing his brightly colored costume. "I anticipated your doubts; they're quite reasonable, actually. Watch." He uncoiled his electromagnetic webrope; then he pointed at a bird flying past Dr. Waters' open window. Rod threw the weighted end of the webrope expertly, catching the helpless bird within the coils. He pulled the bird into the room, disconnected the webrope, and freed the bird once more.

"Yes," said Dr. Waters, "I can see that you are, indeed, the famous Iguana. You have my respect, young man, although I don't understand why you insist on tackling such dangerous assignments instead of contenting yourself

with more normal pursuits."

Rod just smiled, folding the webrope compactly into its place in his costume's belt.

"And I don't understand why you decided to reveal your identity to me. That could have been a dangerous move."

"I looked into your background first," Rod said. "You are the pre-eminent and most respected man in your field, and I need someone of your caliber to advise me."

"I see," said Dr. Waters, sitting back and making a steeple of his two forefingers. "I am, of course, flattered. But, do go on with your story."

"Yes, sir. I must explain to you how my webrope works. A few months ago I stumbled onto the basic principles of magnetism, the subatomic binding force which holds all things together. Of course, as you know, magnetism is an oversimplified term to use to describe the actual mysterious play of electrical forces within the atom. But, in any event, I have learned how it is possible to align the electrons of the surface shells of *any* group of atoms, so that the molecule will be irresistibly and permanently attracted to the magnetic center. This center is, of course, my webrope. It is activated by a certain frequency of radio waves transmitted by this sending device on my belt. When it is operating, the webrope will adhere with all the strength of the limitless power of the atom to whatever it touches. When I shut off the transmitter, the webrope drops off, and the object falls loose, totally unharmed."

"That's utterly fantastic!" cried Dr. Waters. "What a boon to mankind that discovery will be when you decide to publish it."

"Yes," said Rod somberly. "Since the initial breakthrough, I have refined the mechanism even further. These controls over here permit me to throw the webrope as a thin but incredibly strong line, or as an inescapable net, as I choose. I have employed the same principles in these patches on my gloves and boots, so that I may, with some difficulty, climb vertical walls and stand upon ceilings."

"And, with all this, you need me? That seems unlikely."

"You are being modest," said Rod. "I am faced with a desperate battle, the most dangerous since the beginning of my career as a defender of Freedom. I must face The Polarizer, who, since our last encounter, has developed a weapon that I am powerless to analyze, much less defeat. Your resources here, in the Department of Plasmonics, and your own superior knowledge, may be all that stands between civilization as we know it and abject slavery under that maniacal monster, The Polarizer."

The professor rose from his desk, his face flushed and his voice shaking with rage. " 'Maniac'?! 'Monster,' am I? Because I recognize my manifest destiny, my fate, my *right* to rule the world? I, Dr. Bertram Waters, The Polarizer, I *will* rule, for the simple reason that no one can stop me!" He laughed, pushing back his chair. He came around his desk, but Rod had already reached for his webrope. The Polarizer shook his head.

"Flee, you idiot. Flee before I demolecularize you on the spot. Now we both know each other's true identities; but it will do you no good at all, while I can play with you through the avenue of those whom you are so weak as to love! Go! We shall meet again soon—for

the final time!"

Rod fumbled his suitcase closed, knowing that he was helplessly off-guard. He hurried from the office with the demented laughter of The Polarizer ringing in his ears. He had nowhere else to turn; the regular law-enforcement authorities were no match at all for The Polarizer's overwhelming might. He knew that he must defeat the madman himself.

Bob Hanson walked through the garden, along the winding paths that he had known so well as a child. At the far end of the garden was the goldfish pond. He had always loved the pool; it had been the first place that he had ever seen live fish. When he had first started school he used to climb up on the stone pedestal and look into the water. His mother had told him that the bits of yellow and orange were the fish; the sudden splashes he knew to be frogs. In those days the garden and the pond were places warm with their own childhood holiness, and the feeling still hung over them, so that this visit, his first in several years, took on the significance of a pilgrimage.

Hanson paused to read the familiar words on the stone pedestal. The words were cast on a bronze slab, and told of the deaths by fire of scores of children and teachers early in the century. The new school that had been built on the site had been named Memorial, and this is where Hanson had begun his education.

The pedestal was larger than it had been years ago, but the plaque was still stuck on low, so that he could hardly read it without stooping. Above it was another that said:

Memorial School
Robert W. Hanson
attended this school and doubtless
formulated here those ideals
which guided his later career

• • •

"We Must All Make Sacrifices"

• • •

Plaque presented by the
Cleveland Board of Education

Hanson frowned, his mind moving rapidly to no purpose, like a rat in a solutionless maze. It had been nine years since he had graduated from the elementary school; he saw that a new wing had been added. He went up the front steps and, although the children were on vacation, the doors were open and the teachers appeared to be at work. He walked through the dim, drafty halls, remembering how the rooms had seemed to him then. He marveled at the change in scale: the auditorium used to seem so immense!

Here was Room 111. Old Miss Hatterley, third grade. Miss Hatterley had taught him about Sacagawea and how to do book reports. She had probably already retired. In the room, of course, was a bronze marker proclaiming that Robert Wayne Hanson had sat in one of these tiny chairs and learned to spell.

Room 216. Mrs. Loveness. He had had a secret crush on her when he was nine years old. Fractions and Peru. Another plaque on the wall.

"Excuse me, but there's not supposed to be anyone but teachers here today. If you're visiting, you can check in at the principal's office."

"I'm sorry," said Hanson, a bit startled "I used to go to school here. I'm home from college this week and I thought I'd look around."

"I see," said the teacher, a young

woman not much older than Hanson himself. "I went here, too. Perhaps we were here at the same time. I'm Leigh Leonard, kindergarten and first grade."

Hanson took her hand and smiled. "I'm Bob Hanson. I'm a senior at Yale."

Miss Leonard looked at him strangely. "*The* Robert Hanson went to this school, too, you know. And *he* went to Yale. What a funny coincidence."

"*The* Robert Hanson? You know, until a short while ago I had always thought of myself as *the* Robert Hanson. I've never heard of any other."

The young teacher was faintly shocked. "That is unusual. After all, you went to school here. This *is* Robert W. Hanson Memorial School. It was nice meeting you, Mr., er, Hanson. If you want to look around any more, perhaps you'd better see Mr. Ladely in his office on the first floor."

Hanson nodded absently. He was beginning to get frightened. *Robert W. Hanson Memorial School?*

ROD MARQUAND WAS half-crazed with fear. How could he protect all of his friends and relatives against the senseless attacks of the murderous Polarizer? There were too many people, too many opportunities. The only thing to do was to meet The Polarizer first, and defeat him. Rod's superior intellect had enabled him to beat enemy after enemy, each aided by superscientific gadgetry and superhuman powers. But none of them posed the threat represented by The Polarizer.

And the mad Doctor Waters could follow his every move, choosing Rod's unguarded moments for his attack.

Rod worked for hours on end, not stopping for food or rest. His father told Rod's friends and his mother that he had a great deal of schoolwork to make up, but even Mr. Marquand did not realize the extent of the danger. Rod sweated and cursed over the problem, but at last, nearing the point of exhaustion, he found an answer.

The Interstitial Molecular Insulationizer.

This electromagnetic device would serve to insulate the single-molecule surface layers of all objects within its effective operating radius. Thus, theoretically, The Polarizer's ionizing demolecularizer would not be able to penetrate the zone of protection, and the weapon's awesome potential for destruction would be nullified.

Just as Rod was putting the final chromium touches to his jury-rigged working model, his father ran into his workroom.

"Rod! The Polarizer has jammed all radio and television networks and is broadcasting a message. He is challenging you to a battle-to-the-death under The Clock at the Biltmore. You can't meet him, son! He sounds serious!"

Rod gazed at his father tiredly. "He is, Dad. This is it, I'm afraid. This is a battle that is larger than you can know. This is a battle to save everything that we've worked for since our ancestors left their trees to the apes. But I think I have it." He showed the machine to his father.

"What is it, son?"

"An electromagnetic Interstitial Molecular Insulationizer. Now, how do I get in touch with The Polarizer?"

His father frowned. "He doesn't want an answer, fearing that he may be tricked. He just expects you to show up at noon tomorrow."

"All right," said Rod resolutely, "then noon it will be. Wake me at eleven."

"I SEE YOU BROUGHT one of your little Radio Shack toys," said The Polarizer with a sneer. "I suppose you think that piece of junk will save your scaly hide."

"Yes," said The Iguana sternly, "and if you don't surrender now, and agree to return to prison to finish out your sentence, I'll be forced to use it."

"I don't think so!" laughed the Fiend of Crime, firing a burst from his wrist-ionizer at Rod's machine. The IMI began to haze over with a rainbow aura of free ions, and before it could be activated the Insulationizer was destroyed.

"Damn it, growled Rod. He knew that now he was in for a tough time.

Just then, fortunately for him, a man walked into the lobby of the New Biltmore, standing between the two costumed duelers, apparently unaware of the significance of the combat.

"I'm supposed to meet this cheese from Smith here," said the intruder. "You haven't seen her, have you?"

"Hanson!" screamed The Polarizer. "How did you get here? Get out! Get out of here before you're hurt! I worked too hard, for too many years for you to lose it for me now."

Rod took advantage of the interruption to do some quick thinking. The de-molecularizer could easily nullify the effects of The Iguana's webrope *under normal circumstances.* "If only I can. jam. the circuit-breakers. overload. it might be enough.

Rod aimed the webrope well. He flung it out, covering the Polarizer's wrist-ionizers and the de-molecularizer as well. The Polarizer grinned evilly. "That didn't help you before, and it won't help you now," he said. Meanwhile, Hanson fell back, astonished, hiding behind a stuffed plush couch.

Rod held the circuitbreakers in place, oblivious to the painful current that ran through his fingers. The weapons of the two masked men sparked under the strains put upon them. A weird, low humming filled the room.

"My God, what's that?" thought Rod. "It doesn't seem to be my circuitry. Perhaps The Polarizer is in more trouble than he thought." The Iguana glanced at his adversary. The Polarizer's face was hidden to a large extent by his grotesque mask, but Rod could see the frown of concentration and concern.

The humming sound grew louder.

"It's him!" shouted The Polarizer. "It's Hanson! Turn it off! I didn't keep his brain alive for fifteen years to have it end like this! Turn it off before—"

"Aaarrgghh!" Rod was thrown back against the wall of the lobby by a tremendous explosion. He hit the wall heavily, hurting his shoulder and falling to the floor. He couldn't focus his eyes through the smoke, and he lost consciousness.

When he awoke, he saw that the hotel lobby was entirely demolished. The body of Hanson was lying in bits all over the ruined carpet. No sign of The Polarizer could be seen. Apparently he had been buried under the tons of rubble. Rod examined himself gingerly. His uniform had been tattered by the blast, but outside of some very painful burns and bruises, he seemed to be uninjured. He heard the sounds of footsteps—no doubt the police. He decided to leave the mopping up to them, and fled the scene.

"How do you feel?" asked his father.

"All right, I guess. Relieved, too, that the threat of The Polarizer is finished for good. Say, what's wrong with Mom?" Mrs. Marquand was sprawled on the family's living room floor, evidently unconscious.

"You see, the police decided to televise the entire conflict. We watched it all, right there on Channel 9. After the explosion, when they moved in for a close-up of you, we saw that your mask had been torn off. Your mother recognized you then. She went into a state of shock, I believe. We both thought that you were dead."

"Well, I'm all right now," said Rod, "but don't you think that we ought to call an ambulance for Mom?"

"Good thinking, son. But tell me, what exactly happened?"

"I think that I have a pretty clear picture. That young man that interrupted us—"

"Hanson?" asked his father, dialing the phone.

"Yes. He wasn't a real human being."

"*What?* Not a real person? Why, how could that be?"

"He was an MIS, or Modular Identity Synthecator. He was, in other words, an android."

"Android?"

"Right, Dad. Like a robot, only more lifelike. The Polarizer had built a perfect replica of a human being, and housed within it an actual, living human brain."

"The brain of Robert W. Hanson!"

"Exactly. The Polarizer—who was, incidentally, Dr. Waters of the famous Ivy Plasmonics Laboratory—had built the android and controlled him through Hanson's brain, feeding the mind with a consistent but false set of surrogate memories. Apparently Hanson was to play a part in The Polarizer's scheme of world conquest. It is merely a strange coincidence that the android happened by at just that time."

"It *is* ironic, at that. The Polarizer, defeated by his own demonic creation," said Mr. Marquand, holding the limp form of his wife.

"It just occurred to me that Dr. Waters may have been the very person who stole Robert Hanson's body from the catafalque, as the corpse rested in state fifteen years ago. That would fit in with The Polarizer's last comments. What a genius, to have kept the brain alive all that time. If only he had turned that genius to work for the cause of justice."

"Yes, said Mr. Marquand. "But, what caused the explosion?"

"I believe I have the answer. As I was building up the power in my belt-transformer, the frequency from the transmitter shifted just slightly. It's possible that the frequency was precisely that which could cause a feedback reaction in the sensitive system of the MIS; thus, the android's own power supply shorted and caused the whole thing to explode."

"How fortunate for all of us."

"Yes," agreed Rod solemnly. "And now, I guess my career as The Iguana has ended at the same time as that of The Polarizer."

"Yes, son. And I can't say that I'm sorry. It's good to have you back."

"It's good to *be* back, Dad," said Rod, peeking through the blinds to see if the ambulance had arrived yet.

(Continued on page 25)

THINGS ARE TOUGH ALL OVER

TED WHITE

Illustrated by STEVE HARPER

Paul Barnes was a bigot. If you asked him, he'd deny it; he had nothing against blacks, after all. But times change, and the definition of bigotry changes with them. Warning: skip this story if you're squeamish. . . .

WHEN I CHECKED the freezer, I had only one roast left.

"Hey, Becci," I said. "We're down to one roast in the freezer."

She said something from the other room which I couldn't make out.

"Huh?" I said. I was poking around, pushing the other packages around, checking to make sure a steak or a pair of chops weren't all the way in the back. It made some noise. Not enough so that I couldn't hear my wife; just enough so that I couldn't make out what it was she was saying.

"I *said*—I guess you'll have to get some more soon," she said, coming up behind me.

"Yeah," I said.

"Do you have to have meat?" she asked. She didn't push it very hard. Mostly we just go through the motions on this particular argument, since we both know all the lines.

"I give up a lot to live in this goddamned wonderful world," I said, playing out my part. "I ain't gonna give it *all* up."

She sighed. "One of these days, Paul . . ."

"Yeah, yeah, I know." We *both* knew. I'd heard all her arguments and she'd heard all mine. Well, hell, we're a happily married couple; there isn't much else we *do* argue about. Just me and my hunting.

So okay, I have a lot of reasons that sound good. Like, just take the biological facts. Look at a man's teeth. He's got cutting teeth, meat-ripping teeth, and grinding teeth. Sure, omnivorous—that doesn't mean vegetarian; it means *omnivorous*. Including meat. Not *just* meat. Hell, I eat as much soya bread as the next guy; and I'm big on salads. But look at a man's digestive system; look at his intestines. We're not cud-chewers; all you have to do is take one bite of a fresh-carved roast, one bite from a sizzling rare steak to know that. It's in us. It's our biological heritage.

Like I say, I have all the right reasons. But—I think my real reason, my gut-reason, is just that I can't live without meat. I tried. I really did. It just left me depressed and without an appetite.

I stayed off meat for six months, and I lost so much weight I looked like a wreck. I really did—from 210 to 140, and I'm a big-framed man.

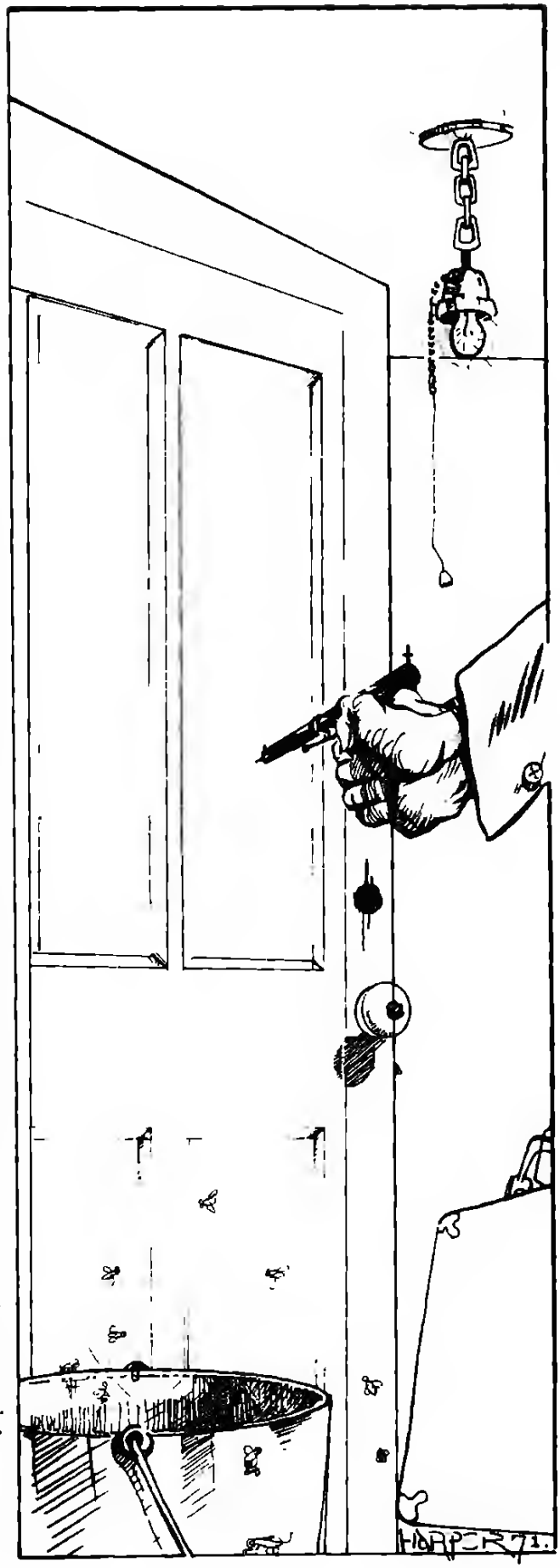
So I went back to eating meat. We had some real arguments about that, at the beginning, but I guess even if she doesn't like to say so, Becci enjoys being the only one in our aptblock who eats meat regularly.

I BLAME IT on the Chinese.

It was plenty bad, back before the War, sure, but when they pushed us into the Big One, that did it. Three weeks, and half of China is good for nothing but fireflies. The Three Week War, sure, we won it. What did we win? Two billion Chink refugees, that's what we won. Bad enough, the last big war the Japs and the Nazis come out in the end better than our friends. Well, I wasn't around for that one, so I don't know. All I know is, half the cars in this country come from Japan or Germany, and all the cameras, my rifle, my watch, my 3-D, it's all from one of those two countries. So this time we've got this whole country that is trying to wipe us off the map, right? And we stop them; we turn Peking into one big crater. So we've won, right? They started it, we finished it, and it's over, right?

Wrong. Now we got two billion people to take care of. Like welfare—on a new scale. Two billion people and their food supply is wiped out—hell, it was never much to start with. Homeless, most of them. The whole country is just milling around and wringing their hands. And begging.

So here we are, we just won this war where they wanted to cream us—hell,



one of their damned missiles dropped an H-Bomb fifty miles out from Santa Barbara, they got *that* close—and now we have to "Pull in Our Belts," as they say, and "Do What We Can."

First it's meatless Fridays. Then it's meatless Fridays and weekends. Who cares? Even the Catholics have been eating meat on Friday for years now. But meat, like they say, is in short supply. To grow a pound of beef, you got to grow eighty five pounds of grain. That's wasteful, they say. You should eat the grain. But look at that grain, they say. You get one little kernel from all that plant. Look at all the plant—stalk, leaves, all that—that you can't eat. So they start making plants you *can* eat. Not in salads, maybe, but when they've run it through the blender a few times, who can tell what it used to be? Same as fish flour. All those junk fish, they grind them up whole, guts, eyes and all, and they expect you to drink their fake milk made out of the stuff.

Eggs? I can't remember how long since I've had them. They're talking about synthetic eggs now, grown without chickens. Sterile, but who cares? You just eat the egg. And they have these new "skyscraper farms," they call them, turning out stuff. There's one three blocks from where I live. But who can tell if the produce from there is what ends up in my local store? Or if it all goes to those damned Chinese.

But what really burns me is when they stopped selling meat. I mean, altogether. You couldn't get it at all. Sure, they said we didn't *need* meat; we had food that met our full daily nutritional requirements and all that. But I wonder: did they ever think about a man's *emotional* needs? Did they ever think about flavor and what a man *wants* to eat? Not by me, they didn't.

"I'M GOING OUT," I said.

Becci gave me this big slobbery kiss. "Take care of yourself, Paul," she said. "You know how I worry."

"Nothing to worry about," I said. "I can handle myself. You know that."

There's been so much trouble lately," she said. "People are talking about how they can't even go out in the corridors at night any more . . "

"Stop worrying. Okay?" I pushed past her and went out the door.

I heard her say "Okay," in a kind of quiet little voice as the door latched.

There's been a black market in meat for years, of course. Expensive as hell, but whenever there's a need, somebody steps in to fill it. That's a fundemental law of life. I still remember how a guy sold me something that turned out to be dead cat—all properly dressed, of course; he said it was rabbit, but when I had it unwrapped that stupid I was not. They left the tail, for one thing.

"Mr. Barnes," the elevator said. "Are you going out tonight?"

"Yeah," I said. "That's right." Smuggling the meat into the building was always a bitch, but at least we have some sort of security. It makes Becci happy.

"Have you any idea when you'll be returning, sir?"

"No," I said. "I'm visiting a friend. What's this? A curfew?"

"No sir, not at all. But we are trying to monitor against unwanted intruders, and we've been keeping the outer lobby doors locked after ten. If you can give us a definite time, we'll be watching for you."

I cursed to myself. "I don't have keys

for the *outer* doors," I said.

"No sir," the elevator agreed. "No one does. It's a new security measure. It was in your bulletin for this month."

"I don't read the things," I muttered. Full of gossipy female stuff. "What do I hafta do? Beat on the door for you to let me in?"

"You can't give us a definite time?"

"No. I told you that." This was really screwing things up. They hadn't had it the last time I'd had to go out for meat. Bad enough the locked doors anyway; I couldn't do this on a set schedule. That was impossible.

"Very well." The voice was reluctant. "If you stop off in the lobby, I'll give you a key. You must return it when you come in. And duplications are not authorized."

"Thanks lots," I said. Nice to know two thou in monthly rent buys *something* in this dump.

I HEADED DOWNTOWN, taking the subway to Times Square. I changed trains there and rode an express out to Brooklyn. It ran local after it crossed the bridge. I stayed on it until it made its last stop on Fourth Avenue, where I got off. I'd try Coney Island some other time.

I came up the steps to a crummy residential section. It used to be a good, middle-class neighborhood full of working stiffs like myself, but then the neighborhood went bad. When the PRs move out, you *know* it's bad. It's strictly Chinktown now; one big refugee camp for the ones with pull.

You'd think that if only less than one-percent of the Chinks made it into this country, that wouldn't be very many. But put them all into one city, and that's a lot. Like my father used to say, "An inch ain't very much, Pauly, unless it's on the end of yer nose." So those bleeding-heart Refugee Aid societies go trumpeting about the place saying, "Look at all the land we got; we owe it to these people to resettle them," and the next thing you know, there's yellow people all over the place. Makes my skin crawl to walk among them. And they're all going at each other like mad with those faggy voices.

The sidewalks are full of them. It's a hot summer night and who wants to be inside those crummy, rat and roach-infested tenements? Even Chinks, who don't even know what a toilet is for, they know that much.

The stink of the streets was overpowering, so I didn't waste a lot of time. I headed up a sidestreet, and turned in to the second building I came to.

There was a girl going in ahead of me. She was short, like most Chinks, and plump. She looked like maybe sixteen or eighteen, but it's hard to say for sure with a Chink. She had on a tight skirt and it looked like nothing under it. I followed her up the inner steps, a half flight back. She looked back at me when she made the turn halfway up from the first floor, and did a kind of frightened double-take; like what was *I* doing *here?* The rest of the way up, she didn't look back at all. Maybe she was scared to.

She had the right-hand apt on the top floor, the one that faced the street. She just pushed the door and went in, no locks. When I looked, I saw the hole where a lock had been and it was old wood, scarred and dark. The lock was long-gone. I guess they figured they had nothing worth stealing.

I stopped in the hall to open my briefcase and take out my folding rifle.

It cost me plenty, black-market, but it was cheaper than paying out a lot every time. Japanese-made; the little bastards are clever, I'll say that for them. I left the stock folded, and didn't screw on the barrel-extension, so it was really not much more than a handgun. Which is all I really wanted. But you take what you can get, these days.

Gun in hand, I pushed open the door and went in.

God, the place stank. I mean, it was *rank*. I looked down and saw this big open pail standing by the door, and flies were all over it. Like I say, they never heard of plumbing.

It was a one-room apt, with a kitchen-area next to the door, and then some cheap bamboo curtains, and the rest of the room. Across the room the windows were wide open and even six flights up the noise from the streets was loud. The air wasn't moving at all.

The girl was bending over a baby, changing it or something, and I think that's what finally made up my mind for me. I mean, Jesus Christ! That young, and already she's breeding *more* of them!

She heard me, or maybe she saw me from the corner of her eye. I was framed by the light from the hall in the open doorway. She straightened up and let her breath out in a kind of a high-pitched gasp. I closed the door behind me, and looked around to see if anyone else was in the aptroom. I didn't see anybody.

"You," I said. "You speak English?"

She shook her head at me and started in babbling.

"Okay, okay," I said, holding up my empty hand. "Cut it." She did. Maybe she understood more than she could talk.

I gestured at her. "Over to the sink." The sink, in this converted apt, was also doubling for a bathtub. It would do.

She looked at me, looked at the baby, and then back again at me. She didn't move. She was trying to look confused. The only light was from a flyspecked overhead circleline fixture, and it washed out the expression from her face. Mostly she just looked stupid.

"Come on, come on," I said. I pointed at the sink.

She gabbled something and pointed at herself questioningly.

I walked over to her, reached down and picked the baby up by one leg, and pitched it across the room into the sink. The baby let out one startled yowl, and then made a hollow thudding noise and was still. The girl started to scream at me, and I hit her across the face with the gun. The threads on the short barrel ripped open her cheek. She collapsed, fell down on the floor, and made a lot of moaning noises. Her hands kept opening and clenching, and her fingernails grated on the linoleum. I stamped on one hand to make her stop; I hate sounds like that. They go right up my backbone.

The door slammed open then, and a man came flying into the room with a knife in his hand. He was an old guy, white hair on yellow skull, and I don't know what he had in mind. Heroics, I guess. I took one look to see no one else was behind him, and shot him. The sound was small and hollow; he made more noise falling down. I could see the door with no lock was going to be a problem, so I put the shit bucket up against it.

I didn't feel like wasting more time here. The place really made my skin crawl. I shot the girl in the head and

opened up my case again to get my working tools out.

Fortunately, the sink was clean and unclogged. I used the dishpan on the drainer for the stuff I wasn't taking, and ran the water a lot while I bled, skinned and cleaned out the baby. The baby was a bonus; I like veal once in a while .

The girl took longer. I had to bone most of her but the roasts, and then there was the wrapping. I use clear plastic bags, and they're quick and handy, but when you're working with your hands covered with blood and slime, even with frequent washing, it doesn't go as fast. It's hard to get the plastic open, for instance, and to keep it open when you put the first piece in the bag.

I was sweating like a pig before I was finished, and the place really smelled bad. I guess the old guy had let a load go in his pants, and *she* was no pleasure to clean. Filthy beasts, the lot of them. I left her head on the floor next to him, and the baby's head on the other side of him; I don't go for exotic stuff like brains.

Then I took out my collapsible travelwear and began packing in the meat. It packs into a smaller space than you'd think. You have to remember, a body has a lot of waste space in it, like the lungs, the gut-area, the head, a lot of the bones—plus, all that blood. When you do an efficient job on the butchering, you can pack the whole thing into a three-suiter. The baby was a minor complication—I wanted to roast it whole, so like I say I hadn't boned it except to remove the head—but I managed to get everything in. I refolded my gun and cleaned and put my tools away in my briefcase, and walked only a little lopsided with the suitcase in one hand and the briefcase in the other.

I had a wary moment stepping out into the hall, wondering if anyone else was hanging around like that old Chink, but no one was. When I left the building, I tried to look like a landlord or somebody, strolling away with my bags. I got a few funny looks, but nobody stopped me. Six bits later I was in the subway and, as far as I was concerned, Home Free.

I WAS WRONG.

Trains run more slowly at night; I'd forgotten that. I'd also forgotten that in areas like this they have cops patrolling the stations. I was still sitting on a hard fibreglass bench waiting for my train when this cop stopped in front of me and looked me over more than I liked. I saw his boots and looked up, raising my eyes to his battle helmet. I couldn't make out any expression on his face; the reflection on his visor took care of that.

"What's that you got there?" he asked me, and kicked at my suitcase. It was pretty solid. I hoped he hurt his toe—but I knew he hadn't; those boots have solid steel toe reinforcements. Just so cops can go around kicking things.

"Just some stuff," I mumbled.

"How's that?" he said.

"Stuff," I said, raising my voice. "Just stuff. What's it to you?" You have to treat these cops like you aren't scared of them. The new ones, the black ones, like this cop, they understand that best.

"Open it," he said, nudging it again with his foot.

"Aw, come on," I said with disgust. "What am I, some cheap heister?"

"Mister, I dunno *what* you are. But we gonna find out, just about now. *Open*

it."

His hand was on his shockstick so I opened it. I set the suitcase down flat, and zipped it open. He took a good long look at the contents, at all those neat plastic bags, and then he pushed the flap back over them again with his toe.

"Where'd it come from?" he asked. "Upstairs?"

I nodded.

"You just bought it off some guy, I guess . . ."

"Yeah," I said. "That's right." We both knew I was lying.

"Black-marketing meat is a crime, you know," he said, sort of musingly. "But hell; every man likes to eat a little meat once in a while, know what I mean?"

I knew.

"Me," he said, "I'm just a TA cop. It's not like what goes on upstairs is my responsibility. I'm here to keep the subway quiet. But a crime is a crime. You know that, don't you? A cop can't just turn his back on a crime. Not even a TA cop."

I knew what he wanted; I just wasn't sure how to give it to him. "You married?" I asked him.

The question seemed to surprise him. "Yeah, sure," he said.

"You know how it is with the wife," I said. "They never think about it. 'We're outta meat, dear,' they say, and that's it, you know what I mean? You go out, you make a big trip, they don't think about it. What I mean, it isn't their worry. But try coming back with your hands empty, and see what they say, right? Isn't that always the way with a woman?"

"Sure, mister; I can see your problem, but . . ."

"Now what I was thinking," I said, "is this: Suppose instead your wife wasn't expecting nothing, and you bring home a surprise for her, know what I'm talking about?"

He raised his plexi visor and let me see him rolling his eyes in thought. Then he said, slowly, "This stuff come from upstairs, you say?"

I could see his thoughts like a comic-strip balloon. "Sure," I said. "Local stuff. Strictly local, you know?"

He grinned. "But—imported, you might say?"

"It's not us, if that's what you're worried about. Nothing to be squeamish about."

"Some people don't draw no lines," he pointed out.

"I do," I said. "So do you. So you got no worries, right?" I knew what was bugging him. Eating meat is one thing; cannibalism, that's something else. Hell, I wouldn't eat one of *us* either. I'm a civilized American, after all.

I settled the baby on him, and he was happy. Then the train came in, and I had to zip my suitcase back up and get on. He was already walking down the platform the other way.

I didn't start sweating until the blast of the air conditioning hit me, cold air on my forehead and my clothes suddenly damp and clammy and sticking to me all over. It always happens that way.

It seems like it gets harder each time, too. I never have much trouble getting the meat, but first that business with my building's locked doors, and then the cop Like everything else in modern life, it's getting complicated.

I was thinking, just as I changed trains at Times Square, maybe I should have gotten something off the old guy, too.

—Ted White

Most of Jack Dann's stories are much longer than the one which follows, and curiously dense in prose and construction. Here, in only a little over a thousand words, he draws a sharp–

CARTOON

JACK M. DANN

THE ROOM WAS YELLOW; the air was light from the absence of breathers, and Lorne watched the turtle hide behind a patch of yellow rocks.

The room whispered to him and he shut it out, concentrating on the silent screen of the televison. There was no reason for sound. The cartoon was shape and color; sound would only counterfeit the fantasy—his mind's tongue would substitute the words he needed to hear.

The turtle was tired, every third breath choked in his mouth. The rabbit was close, his pink nose inhaling the dirt.

The room continued its monosyllabic monologue. He did not have to listen, he did not have to do anything: he was a little boy. Sticking his fingers into his ears to muffle the room, he talked to himself.

YOU ARE A LITTLE BOY.

He could not help but hear that. He might silence it by squinting his eyes and thinking about something else, but he would have to concentrate and seal himself from the room before it spoke again. There would not be enough time.

YOU ARE A LITTLE BOY.

It grew stronger and refused to leave. Resigned, he answered, "Yes. I am."

It passed quickly. Lorne forgot and it never happened. He fondled the television set, changing the station and moving the volume knob back and forth until the twists became a staccato march mimicked by a rose-colored commercial pouring grease into a teflon pan. There were no other cartoons.

A dozen crickets watched the hidden turtle. Would they give him away? Only the turtle knew.

The scratching began again outside the door. It was a distraction, as if someone were placing bricks behind it. He visualized a tan uniform smearing the yellow bricks with a paste spattered trowel. And the bricks would be evenly lined up, one matching the other, separated by thin white lines of mortar.

He was going to see who was smearing the bricks. They could not stop him from watching. Later, he could take a walk, see a movie, or browse through the huge glittering department stores.

No.

It was strong—he shut it out and concentrated on the bricklayer.

It continued. NONONONONONONONO.

The room refused to be muffled. SIT DOWN AND WATCH TELEVISION.

He could not block the room out, but he was still going to open the door and walk out. The large silver doorknob beckoned him, pulled him, sparkled at him. He pushed toward it to investigate. His reflection was grotesque; dancing uncoordinated blotches of flesh mimicked him.

YOU ARE A LITTLE BOY.

"No," he screamed, pulling at the door.

LEAVE THE DOOR ALONE.

The room kept ordering and Lorne kept disobeying until his head ached from the sound. It was relentless; it was sharp; it bit; it stomped; it would not stop. His head was full of screeching. Rationalize. Don't go out.

The room took notice of his unconscious plea. The sound grew soft; it whispered and soothed. His head cleared, the fullness disappeared. Softly the room said, YOU ARE A LITTLE BOY.

Lorne nodded yes, feeling relieved. "I am" automatically followed.

The television screen was now filled with a channel pattern, a large six superimposed upon the stars and stripes of the American flag. It was late. Where was everybody? He did not want to sleep alone in the room. The room could not breathe. There should be someone else, he thought. Words formed in his head, but he could not grasp them—they were part of another vocabulary.

He gazed at the rumpled bed by the wall. It smelled of urine. Forgetting the bed, he rolled on the floor in simulated exultation. His skin lazily pulled him upward, holding him as he swam.

And the scratching began, louder this time, more urgent. The bricklayer was lining up the bricks again as the cement slowly hardened.

Lorne walked to the door. It was too late to lay bricks.

LEAVE THE DOOR ALONE. GO TO SLEEP.

Just turn the knob and walk out. The scratching became slightly louder.

LEAVE THE DOOR ALONE.

Lorne waited for the room to speak again, to tell him to stop, to comfort him with its soothing monotone. But it refused to speak and the comfort of one reality fluttered before giving way to another.

Combing his fingers nervously through his hair, he gazed at the door. Listen to the room. It was too late. He wanted to sleep or make up things. He did not want to open the door. He had to open the door.

He couldn't. It was a brick wall; it might be a brick wall; it could have been a brick wall. It was locked and he was alone.

The light dimmed as his face magnified into sponge layers of used plastic, as his eyes receded into darkness, as his hair fell out strand by strand upon his stooped shoulders.

The scratching continued.

The room was completely dark, a total undimensional darkness, a darkness that swallowed the hours as it stretched and contracted. Intermittently, he could see splotches of violet, as if he had pressed his palms tightly against his eyes. Wiping a string of saliva from his beard, he felt his way to his bed, his age an oversized overcoat trailing behind him.

The room softly said, YOU ARE A LITTLE BOY, but it was too weak, it was barely audible.

The tall, white uniformed man switched on the monitor. A sallow old man, spittle drooling from his beard, stared mindlessly into the screen.

"Probably thinks he's watching television," the new attendant said.

"Probably. Now, this checks the inflow of gas." He pointed to a mottled plastic knob nestled behind a metal overhang. "The toleration differs from oldster to oldster, some can take a month before a complete drying out. This one needs it every four days, drying out period is"—he drew his fingers down a list of numbers in a loose leaf binder—"fourteen hours. There, that takes care of him. The flow will increase until it reaches saturation, and then it will taper. Okay?"

"Yes, Okay!"

"This checks the monitor." The screen faded. "That's it for this wing. We'll take an elevator out."

The room brightened. He could not fight it—it was too strong.

YOU ARE A LITTLE BOY

The television was on. The crickets scratched themselves to tell the rabbit of the turtle. The turtle nestled its head in the luminous grass. It listened for the rabbit's bounding paws. The rabbit was too quick: it pounced upon the turtle's tarnished shell and severed its head.

The cartoon was over and Lorne belatedly answered the room.

The scratching stopped.

—Jack M. Dann

(Continued from page 15)

THE ANNOUNCER'S VOICE droned on, carried by all the television networks simultaneously. "... filing past. The coffin is, of course, closed. Within are gathered the pieces of the artificial body used by the late Dr. Bertram Waters, The Polarizer, to sustain the mind and brain of Robert Wayne Hanson. We are honoring the great man who died fifteen years ago, on May 19, 2008: Robert Hanson, who died again just a matter of days ago. He was a superior man whose first eulogic honors were interrupted by the mad designs of a master criminal.

"Robert Wayne Hanson rests in state, and we mourn his passing anew. What he might have accomplished had he been given Dr. Waters' second chance at life is left to speculation, but—"

Across the country, in hundreds of thousands of homes, hundreds of thousands of unshaven, frustrated men called into their kitchens, asking, "Baby, who the *hell* was Robert Hanson?"

—Geo. Alec Effingen

ON SALE IN JANUARY AMAZING (Nov. 11th)

4:48 PM, OCTOBER 6, 197–: LATE AFTERNOON ON CHRISTOPHER STREET by TED WHITE, THE HEYWORTH FRAGMENT by RICHARD A. LUPOFF, COMMUTER SPECIAL by RICHARD E. PECK, and the conclusion of THE WRONG END OF TIME by JOHN BRUNNER.

GARDEN OF EDEN

Jack Haldeman—known to his friends and most of sf fandom as Jay Haldeman—is the older brother of Joe Haldeman, whose "I Of Newton" we published here in our June, 1970, issue. This is Jack's first published story, and it definitely won't be his last.

JACK C. HALDEMAN II

Illustrated by DAVID COOK

THE WONDER HASN'T LEFT. That's the amazing thing. It's been quite a few years now, yet I still get a small thrill when they play the new National Anthem.

Of course it was hard at first. New things always are. At least *I* didn't have bad blood in my family and we still get to see each other on alternate Thursdays. So nice. Silly smiles all day long.

It was only last Thursday—or was it three weeks ago? Two? Time goes so fast when you're having fun. Anyway, my wife and I went to the Meeting Grounds, a well kept domed park where they let us talk. On alternate Thursdays.

"Tell me dear," she said.

"OK," 'twas I. "What?"

"Why does the sun always shine for Thursdays?"

"They want it to be nice for us, I guess." I was never much good at answers but she was always so good at questions like remember how it was when we were young and days were short and I tell her no I can't remember because it was so long ago that we touched body to body and youth was wild in our blood. I can't remember. How it was.

But it must have been nice. That's the way it was, I guess.

"But honey, it never rains when we're together."

She was right.

"Yes," I answered thoughts like wool in my head.

"Why?" She tore off a piece of plastic grass and chewed on it as I guess all lovers do, at least all I've seen. Or can remember.

"They want it that way, I guess. They want us to be happy. Not like the old days. They must be very kind to such old people as us." I am 36 and she is 29. If days on a calendar mean anything. And they do you know. They are everything.

"This is a very nice place to picnic," she said as she reached into the bag she had and brought out two sandwiches, potato salad and our pills. The lunch bags are nice. I mean what's a picnic without them? Everybody has one. They give you one when you go

in. And they put you in one when you leave goddamn it now where do those thoughts come from seeping out from under some rock in my brain it must be time for my pill. A clean head is a happy head. That's what they tell us. So it must be true.

"Thanks," I said as she handed me my sandwich and pill. "Liverwurst is one of my favorites."

"I think it's deviled ham," She looked upset, why I wonder.

"It doesn't matter, I like them all. They are always deviled ham and I know that but it can't matter much.

The pill somehow is harder to take than the sandwich which is OK—god knows they try—but it all comes out shit in my head. Come on small intestine—assault that pill and grind it and attack it with all your little enzymes. My mind is sore afraid.

That was then and today is now. I am at work. My job is to take these two things here, you see, and put them together just so. Like that, you know. And then I put them here. On this little belt that takes them through that hole over there in the wall where someone checks them to see if I have done it right. It is an important job. They told me it was. All jobs are important. They keep the mind and body busy.

But I have something on my mind today and it is so good I want to share it with you. Sharing is good. They told me that too. They tell me lots.

My name is near the top of the list for snuggle. I can't believe it but it is true because I saw the white paper on the bulletin board that is just inside the door in my dorm. The other guys saw it too and they were envious (which is bad—they told me that too) because they are all married and have never



seen their names so close to the top. I have never known anyone whose name came up and I know lots of people. I think I know them. Chew the gum. Pop the pills.

I'm glad for the gum. It keeps my jaws busy and fills me with a real good warm feeling. They give me the gum. They give me everything. It is nice to be nice. They are real nice to me and I wonder what is snuggling and how come me?

The bell in my ear rings twice and I know that means I am to go to the supervisor—kind fellow about eighteen tall thin. His office is down the hall so I push HOLD on my desk and get up and start to leave and someone sits down in my chair still warm and presses ON. He is lucky to work.

"Mr. Guilford, or may I call you Bob?" My supervisor, as I have already told you is young and nice as they are all young and nice. I nodded. "You have good genes," he said.

"Jeans?" I'm not so smart anymore. They tell me I am getting senile like everyone does after they pass a certain mark on the calendar. And I don't have anything but the slacks they give me anyway.

"Never mind," He was always so kind to me. Chew the gum, Pop the pill. "You know something extra special is going to happen soon."

"You mean my name on the list on the wall?"

"That's right. You are scheduled for snuggling soon. This will mean some changes in your life for awhile." He had a Yin and a Yang on his desk and he moved them around as he talked.

"Change?" New things are bad. They bother me.

"Yes. You are to meet your wife . . . let me see . . . a week from today. That means you will be moved to separate quarters tonight. They will tell you what to do. Oh, by the way, do you have any gum with you?"

"Yes." I always have it. They give it to me.

"You had better leave it here."

I put the pack on his desk and, out of a sense of rightness, took the wad out of my mouth and set in his ashtray.

"Don't go back to work. Go to T-4, room 405." He was still smiling.

"Yessir," I said. And he is eighteen at most. Where's my gum? Where's my pill?

Walls surround me pressing soul from mind from body. It's there. All there goddamn it clear as day and in front of my face and nose all the time. The pills. The gum. There all the time fogging my mind.

I think I'm going insane.

I am the walrus and the eggman and the world around me is dissolving in multi-hued smears of melting fibreglass and plastic, exposing stainless steel skeletons staring with blank eyesockets. Empty. When the shell leaves only the inside is left. What if there is nothing inside? Echos all around.

Where to put my feet. I'm so confused. Yesterday, yesterday I knew it all and somehow it has slipped from my mind and it is almost there. Right around the corner—next to the candy store which I fed the foolish pennies of my misspent youth—such as it was.

A fact. Just one concrete fact that I can put my teeth and tongue and face into. Make some order out of this swarming infestation they have made of my mind.

They. Them. The Great God Al-

mighty Plural. What have they done to me? Milkshake pablum out of my mind. Easy to digest, but nonsubstantial. Where the hell am I going? Wish they'd turn on a light once in a while. Shove your gum. Shove your pill. Eat your everloving heart out.

Those goddamn pills and gum. They keep your mind in a groove. Their groove. I know that now. I know a lot now. Like, for instance, that is to say, I mean, making love and making babies. You remember that don't you? I do now. And that crap they put in your mouth. Gum. Pills. They make you impotent. They make you forget. They make you lots of things. They make you stupid. Shit.

But in a flash my body has shaken the drugs. Their drugs that they can't give me now because they want my sperm and life and genes. Shove it, I say, shove it.

My mind swoops in waves back to the time one. You know, the start. Where it all began. Act one. The beginning of the end.

The musty basement off campus was home to me then. And all the others, too. Me, George, Ted, Sandy and Jan. You know Jan. She's my wife. You met her back in the potato salad. A lifetime ago that's yet to come.

It was back then, the golden days when we knew it all. I remember lots of things now. The lists. People who stood in our way. The collective mind that was stuck in the old ways. The dumb ways. The blind ways. We would kill them.

Jan's concentration as she rolled a fuse. The sweat on her upper lip as she played life and death. And the rolling and moaning as we balled on the floor, in the bathroom with the cold tiles on my knees and elbows and the small tracings on her back. We gave most of our lives. Some of us gave it all. They were the lucky ones.

The others couldn't, wouldn't understand. It was them—the Johnsons, the Humphreys, the Nixons, the Agnews, all them. And the deaths. Kennedy in a hail of grey matter and red roses, another Kennedy in a balloon filled hall of tricks, a King from his balcony. Violence can only beget violence. We lived for the moment, with one foot in the future.

Burn and bomb. We were young, we were the *world* then. We were shaping everyone's environment. The master plan was an Agnew dart board and swearing it had to be him before Nixon or we would never see another sunrise. How one man's picture on the wall could carry so much hate. I mean it was so real and we were so close to it.

I think I'm going insane.

The system, the system. Where to hit it first. At home. Where it hurts. Cut the ropes that bind us to society. ROTC buildings smoldering ashes and we laughed laughed laughed because this was only the beginning and we knew—goddamn *knew* it. Burn, mother, burn your everloving heart out.

The predictable response to our actions. Muddle around in Presidential blue ribbon, white toilet paper commissions. Nothing rolls so slow as a nation in its death throes. God, how we laughed. And the FBI. The "ten most wanted" no longer glory filled bank robbers but the real enemies of their social structure. Us. Shades of Che. A gun in one hand, a Coke bottle of Esso Extra in the other. Fill 'er up, please. And tack me up on the Post Office wall.

A Molotov kills just as dead as jellied gasoline on orientals, but it's so much more *personal*, you know. We thought we did.

Underground. We disappeared like graft in a bureaucracy. Lots of people would help us. Not all radicals, just people who believed. They're mostly dead now, and lucky are the worms that eat their bones.

Jan and I lived through it all. I remember San Francisco. The cold fog that settled over the city gray-cloak covered us as we walked, arms entwined, through the brick faced streets. Home was a disjointed, out of time place. Footsteps faint in the anonymous darkness, just another couple out for a stroll. Death in our souls as the country collapsed. We looked out over the bay.

"It's worth it. Isn't it?" She was always good at questions.

"It has to be." I was better at answers then. "Or nothing is."

I hugged her and we groped in the dark and the damp air settled on our fumbling bodies and I brought her to me with frustration and bitterness and love. Two fools watching the world spin round and fold in on itself while we made the usual sounds of love.

I *hope* that I'm going insane.

We were too much with the world then. And each other.

Then it was Canada. Before they closed the border. We were both wanted by half the organized bodies in the States. Inciting to riot, arson, unspeakable crimes against society. The list grew longer and more people were after us and the harder we ran until Canada was the only answer.

The sign at the border said all drug users should register as they crossed. Since we were murderers in a matter of speaking I peered my eyeballs all over that sign and saw nothing that said heinous criminals should register. Just mama's son Johnnie who blew grass when he could find it. That and the acid and the excitement and the Falls really blew my mind. I spit when we passed the flags in the middle of the bridge and we both laughed. God, we were young and just a little foolish.

But Canada was dead. They had their own problems that were not ours no matter how hard we tried to fit in. The house we stayed in was full of thirty-some year old men who had left the states years ago to avoid the War. Pointless husks of burnt out nothing. We were live and had a cause. One that *meant* something. Or so we thought.

When I was very young, I had a dog. He died.

We stayed in Canada for a couple of years. Jan lost two kids in messy moments. I think my life would have changed if only. Too many if only's in this messed up world. God, but I love her.

So we left the land of the far north while the smoke was still curling up from what was left of the cities. The provisional government had taken over by then. That they had much to govern was questionable. Hate always takes its toll.

But we were with it. I mean, we had been in the middle of everything, deep in the middle. Jan and I had been there from the start and we exiled heroes were returning. Or so we thought.

We headed for Washington for our deserved piece of the action. Burned out blackened cities were charcoal footnotes on that trip. Our spirits lifted at each glorious smoldering victory. The battle—*our* battle had been waged and

we had won.

Remember the pills? Remember the gum?

Getting around was not too hard. Everyone was hitching aimlessly and rides in the commandeered army trucks were plentiful. At first, every now and then, someone would try a train. They're not hard to run, you know. But switches and crew and all that take a lot of coordination and planning and we (they) hadn't reached that stage yet. Planes were cool, though, but they crashed a lot. Cars were safer.

Dead people stink when nobody moves them. So do dead ideals.

Anyway, we reached Washington and found the people in charge. A million tents and people living in the remaining office buildings. We were directed to a forest of tents and shanties set up around the rubble of the White House.

All the young faces.

They took our names, gave us numbers. All neatly printed on neat little pieces of paper. I should have known then, but victory (ours) (theirs?) messed up my eyes. The messed up brain came later.

We wandered through Washington that day. In spite of what it stands for, I've always liked the city. And now the sense of urgency was in the air. People purposefully hurrying around. All so young.

Most of the landmarks were gone. What they once stood for was gone, too. But that had gone sour a long, long time ago. It went out with human dignity.

We slept that night under the stars and the moon in the warm spring air. I remember now, Jan. I remember what it was with your young hard body under mine. And the lingering kiss when it was done and how we hated to separate, clinging to each other and I wonder if we thought (I don't think I did) that this was the last time. Which it was. Did you know that? I didn't.

The next day we returned to check the board that carried our posted assignments. You cried when you saw that we would go to separate places and I told you there there don't worry, it's only going to be temporary and I had that first funny feeling that something was happening going wrong. Terribly wrong. All the young faces.

You are she and she was me. All together.

Then fell the sugar years.

A veil of dope induced placidity clouds my memory, but lots of the pieces fit. Just like Jan and I and you and all the others fit—pretty little picture people in their lopsided jigsaw puzzle.

But what can I say? Our dreams went sour. As it turned out, we weren't part of it anyway. Too old, too something. They cut us out.

All so young. I can't remember seeing any old faces. I think they prolong youth somehow. Maybe it makes them sterile. I don't really know what's happening out there.

The pills and gum are hopelessly addictive. They give me a shot each morning to kill the hunger inside. At least I think it's morning there is never any light and no windows and the patterns are dissolving in darkness shades of black. Oh yes, they try to hold me and the boy—about fifteen and strong as hell—rubs it in and says that if he should forget my shot one day I would bash my head against the wall, trying to get at the drive inside me. I want to kill him but I just can't figure out how.

I can tell by the way he talks to me that he thinks my mind is still messed up. Jan and I have always had strange reactions to drugs.

I'm sure they're sterile. Maybe we are too while we're doped up. But what can it mean? A sort of game with them? Moving us around like so many pawns while they laugh behind the scenes? What *happened* here while we were in Canada? Something I don't know about . that's for sure. Are they laughing at us, or is it all deadly serious to them? I don't know.

There must be something I can do while I have my head straight. But what? And how? I can't—

"Time to go."

The door has opened and a figure silhouetted in the hallway light is standing in the doorway. He is trying very hard to be larger and stronger than me and succeeding very well. He probably has help with him and I guess I'll make my move later.

The lights in the corridor hurt my dark-adjusted eyes, making them water in protest. My blurred vision warps the walls, doors, people—creating an unreal, alien world. I stumble here, and trip, and move jerkily along as firm hands grab me and lead me down the shifting, antiseptic walkway. How many people are behind these doors? Playing out their shadow lives while someone else pulls the strings and, arms all akimbo, they twitch in random patterns.

A door is open and they ease me in the darkened room and the door is closed thunk click and locked behind me.

"Bob?" I can hardly see but someone is in the corner. It is her voice I hear and her fear I feel.

"Jan! Do you . . ."

"Yes, it's all there again. The old memories. But why? What's happened to us?" I could hear her silent sobs.

I groped through the darkness, hit my knee on something, and found her. Warm, soft—face wet with salty tears and kissed her and held her.

"Bob, they told me we can have a baby. Medical techniques have improved and, oh, I . . ."

"Stop it. We can't. They won't let us keep it. We'll just be helping them."

"But honey. A baby." Softly sobbing dreams away.

I hold her and she cries and I talk to her meaningless words while the universe gets smaller and smaller, shutting out all existence beyond the indistinct, darkened walls. Bits and pieces of our former lives fall, revealed, to the floor as time untwines and formless I AM LOSING MY PLACE fears hide under the table. Somehow her clothes have disappeared and she is no longer crying, but whispering in my ear. There is a soft, warm fog in my head and in my arms and I—

How can I be so confused? Consistency of time and place are slipping from me. Everything is sliding away like a treadmill beneath my feet. I feel like I'm falling and the only thing that still has any shades of reality is the body beneath me. So I take it. And then that too goes.

IT IS THURSDAY and warm, as usual, in the park. I am waiting for Jan who should be by in a few minutes. What? Oh, work is coming along nicely, thank you.

Jan gets bigger everytime I see her. She is happy and says she is going to have a real nice baby and they will give it a good home and it will always be happy.

Just like us.

—Jack C. Haldeman II

Gardner Dozois is known by sf readers primarily for his stories in Orbit *and* Quark*—and by convention-goers as a manic personality with flying hair and Stanton A. Coblentz's autograph tattooed on his left breast. None of which will prepare you for—*

WIRES

GARDNER R. DOZOIS

I FIND THAT DEATH is not like they said it would be in the manual.

It *hurts*, was the first coherent thought I had, Jesus it *hurts*. I felt betrayed, bewildered, stunned, hurt, *hurt*. Jesus, I didn't know it was going to *hurt*. There was wet blood flowing between my fingers, and the warmth was spreading and I was afraid to move my hand. Every ounce of consciousness was concentrated on the bloodflow, and yet somehow it almost seemed detached and impersonal and faraway; a metaphysical leaky faucet, unimportant. The world was draining away, ebbing in steady tempo with the blood that eddied and oozed between, over and around my clenched white knuckles. Color went first, then focus. I remembered the manual. They tell you lifesaving techniques in the manual. Stop the bleeding, I recited, my fingers stirring involuntarily like sick snakes, pressing, scrabbling futilely, dabbling and splashing in the blood-flow. My knee gave out and I toppled slowly to the side, head thunking against the trampled ground as the world pulsed and did a slow somersault. Treat for shock, I muttered numbly, and I could feel my blood leaking into the cold mud, soaking into the ground and puddling until I floated on a vast red ocean rippled by sonorous waves, and I flailed to keep my nostrils above it, and I didn't want to sink below the satin surface because there might be fish, and I didn't want to see the fish, or the mossy bones. There was a numbness spreading down my nerves like a velvet winter, and there was frost forming, hardening on my side, ice over blood, icebergs on a textured sea, and with the recession of pain came realization and personalization and I said Jesus, I don't want to die, *I* don't want to die, I don't want to *die*, Oh Christ, oh please, please, and I cried and said please and shit myself and tried to push icebergs away and screamed at the gradually contracting darkness. And that's how I learned that everybody's got wires.

Now I've never had much faith in much of anything—typecast as the seedy

atheist, although I liked to prop my inherited uneasiness by saying I was an agnostic, back before I learned that to the popular mind the distinction between the two is as meaningless as the enigma of how many angels can dance on the head of a printed circuit, back when I was anything at all—but even I fell for this to a degree. Oh my yes, my children. It's impossible to fully escape the mythos of your birth culture, baby; I learned that. I mean, you think you're rolling along pretty good, Enlightened and cool and With It, right? Not bound by your bowels like the rest of the common herd. You've got perspective, you've got insights, you know all the tricks and machinations of the society trap and you're not going to play the game like all the other zombies, and then somebody lowers the boom, pushes the button, and at that crucial moment you discover that you don't know shit. Somebody jerks on a hot wire connected to the back of your brain, and you *jump*, and you dance on your wire as it's pulled, not because you want to, but because you *have* to. We've all got wires, every last zombie of us, every last poor stupid bastard of us who's stumbling around blathering about free will and Captain of My Own Soul, pip-pip, unaware of the wires radiating up out of his skull, out of his gut, out of his bowels. If you don't know that you've got wires, if you're saying, Shit, I ain't got no wires, then you've just never been in a position where somebody's yanked on your leash, where the world's poured hot current through your wire, making you flop and twitch like a frog in a biology lab. Everybody's got wires, man; they're ingrained in you from birth, and each second you live pushes them deeper and deeper into your flesh, and there's no way you're ever going to get them out, not ever. We're both in the same cage, baby; only difference: I rattle the bars and you don't.

And in the end, does it make any difference at all? When you find that you're really a laboratory animal salivating at a Pavlovian bell, does anything make any difference at all? I mean, all these years of going around thinking you're just a bit better than the next guy, that you know just a shade more, and then you didn't even realize that dying *hurts*. I think that upsets me more than anything else.

I guess I must have stayed a couple of hours. Long enough to think about wires and discover more of them every second, long enough to realize that the whole war, the whole world, was being run by a smothering mesh of manipulating wires, jerking here, entangling there, subtle as a caress, honest as napalm. The world pulsed and shifted and melted, mingling with me, it becoming me, me becoming it. Half the time I was sprawled in mud and blood, shivering, watching the tall grass saw at the serene blue sky, listening to insects chirrup timidly near my ear and following the ravening bark-chuff of small arms fire nearby, and the other half I was drowning and struggling in the tacky red ocean, lifted and rocked by restless slow-motion surges, fighting the pull of the cold dead hands that had closed invisibly around my ankles and strove to drag my head under the scum-laced surface.

It was a long lonely time, dying. It wasn't easy; you had to work at it. That's another thing they don't tell you in the manual. Well, I worked at it, hard, and after a while I'd made enough

progress so that the worst of the pain was gone, and the ocean had receded to bloody ripples behind my eyes. I found I was good at dying, once I'd gotten the hang of it; it wasn't the sort of thing that needed much practice. When the ocean had gone, and left me alone in the echoing chamber of my mind, I thought a lot about wires.

At first I didn't think about them, I experienced them, stirring and tugging in my flesh one by one, wires beyond number, more than I'd ever imagined. They played me like a puppeteer plays his marionette, setting me gasping and weeping, writhing and dancing at will, hauling me involuntarily through the gamut from terror to hate to ultimate loneliness and beyond to indifference. After someone plucked the wire marked "God," and I had groveled and prayed and moaned that I would be good forever if He'd just make me safe make it *not* and that I loved Him and I'd do anything for Him honest I would if He'd just save me, and after I realized that there was nobody listening—well, after that, I began to think about wires.

I thought about the high clear note of the hate wire, as I felt my fingers and toes go away, and I wondered if I hated the guy who'd killed me, crumpled into myself with my breath coming spidery, and the answer came two-pronged. On one level, the level where the spiked fist in my gut was, the level where I'd once been a man with a home and loved ones and a Promising Future, the answer was clear: yes, I hated the bastard, hated him with a red-washed intensity beyond words, hated every cell in his body, every bone, every tuft of hair, hated *him*, personally, and the life he had that I was losing, sweat breath shrivel in his goddamn bastard throat.

On another level, a level where numbness and loss of blood was making it easier to think dispassionately every second: no, I didn't hate him. Matter of fact, I was surprised how little I thought of him at all, how little he mattered. I had almost begun to consider him as an inanimate object, as a *thing*, as a *force*, and I realized with a tiny shock that I had always thought of him that way, although before it had been disguised by fear and habit and pre-packaged hate. I mean, he had his wires too, and he was being jerked along by them, propelled blindly headlong through space by forces and circumstances he couldn't understand and probably wasn't even aware of. Whose fault was it that I'd been careening along in the other direction, yanked by my own set of wires? Is there malice in a head-on collision? On the part of the cars, I mean, no matter who's in the driver's seat and what their intentions are. Cars got wires too, just the same as people do. And when the hand on the controls swerves them into a telephone pole or heads them for a brick wall, there's nothing they can do but *go*, and splatter themselves all over the highway.

Everybody's got wires. Who yanks the wires? Shit, I don't know. Maybe Him, maybe Somebody Else, maybe nobody. Maybe the wires yank themselves, world without end; I don't know. But I know that ultimately I can't blame the poor stupid bastard who shot me because he *is* a poor stupid bastard, a grotesquely-dancing zombie like the rest of us, caught in the web like everybody else, like me, and even like *you*. Don't believe you've got wires? My, my, one of these days, aren't you going to

be in for a surprise.

Look: he shot me, I die. One of these smothering mornings he'll be coming up out of his hole and somebody in a tree will center the crosshairs on his shaven head and carefully caress the trigger, and blam! (splatter of blood and bristly black hair; sudden hushing scream of startled bird), they'll get *him*. These things even out eventually, and you know, none of it really makes much difference. Identity blurs past a certain point, and one corpse begins to look very much like another, except to the corpses of course. And all this should be comforting to me, but it isn't, because down there where the spiked fist is, down there where a too-late medic, eyes glazed and disinterested by a glut of lives, is trying half-heartedly to load me onto a muddy field stretcher, down *there*, I still hate the bastard, and philosophy isn't worth a damn. You never get rid of the wires, not wholly, not ever, not even at the end. Comforting isn't it? Think how *alone* you'd be without them.

They have me in a field hospital now, and the narrow cot is not immaculate, and the doctors look more like weary rumpled human beings than starched white pillars, but I suppose they haven't done too badly, considering the circumstances; you have to make allowances. One side of the tent is filled with desperate cases like us who will be rushed further back by chopper for emergency treatment, but I don't think it's going to do any good. I'm not sure if I'm dead yet or not. I can't do anything anymore except lie here and watch the flies chase themselves around and around the big naked light bulb that hangs by a wire, swinging and burning like a sun on a leash, and the light and dark wash alternately over me. My pupils do not dilate. I think that I am probably dead. Am I breathing? I can't tell any more, but I can feel somebody sitting on my legs and there's no one there, and now, under the limp sheets, I can feel the cold caress of marble hands groping for my ankles, pulling me down slow through layers of thick fuzzy cloth. The sun is swinging in a slow circle of light, leaving a trailing tail of blurred jewels, pulling and jerking hesitantly against the tacky resistance of the sopping air. The circles are becoming smaller and tighter (a line is a dot moving through space), contracting down to the smallest possible circle to a dot absolute zero full stop end null negate nothing. (a dot is a line at rest)

I think I am dead.

Random thoughts tumbling in the dry confusion, unresolved notes:

Man comes by the ragged rows of cots, scared corpsman in soiled whites, face pinched, lips tight, fighting fear and nausea. Checking the bandages, bending down, hands smelling of iodine and bedpans and death, looking at you, glancing around furtively, looking back, lips pursing, wet flicker of nervous tongue against white teeth, asking Man, why did you do it why'd all these cats do it why get your ass shot off, why? In the following silence, looking around again, more uneasy, laugh half-ashamed at own outburst, scrunch down shoulders, muscle jump in cheek, hands clench, laugh again, harsher, self-scorn, talking to a goddamn stiff, crazy bastard, scurrying away, shoulders bent, hands flapping at the wrist, still scared, still running yanked by wires and not knowing why.

(Continued on page 124)

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THE DRAMATURGES OF YAN

JOHN BRUNNER

Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA

Their shattered moon was a ring, girding the planet Yan, mute witness of the power—and the folly—of the longago Dramaturges of Yan. Now a human had come to recreate the Mutine Age of the Dramaturges. Could he be stopped in time?

(Second of Two Parts)

Synopsis

The planet Yan is the only world within the reach of the go-net and humanity which contains a humanoid population so alike humanity that sexual relations between the two races are possible—albeit sterile. The planet Yan has other unique aspects, primary among them the surviving symbols of the peak of Yannish culture, millenia earlier: the Mutine Mandala—a construct of tall crystal pillars; the Mullom Wat—a singing tower which bends with the winds; the Gladen Menhirs; the Mutine Epics, an eleven-volume work which has defied all translations save one; and the Ring—the remnants of the moon of Yan. All but the last-named are the work of the Dramaturges of Yan, the poet-scientists of legend who created a culture so fine and perfect that it has functioned smoothly for a period longer than all human existence.

But the balance wheel of Yannish culture is now wobbling a bit: an enclave of humans, numbering some 300-strong, has now been established on Yan for about a hundred years, and while the older Yanfolk have managed to preserve their equilibrium, the younger have not. They have, many of them, become apes, aping the human ways in dress and actions and in bi-racial pairings.

The older Yanfolk are disturbed. Their culture is precisely molded so that a birth (which occurs rarely—the average Yannish female has but one or two pregnancies in a lifetime of almost 150 [Earth] years) is followed by a shrimashey, *a drug-induced orgy of sex and violence in which the adult population is reduced by the same number the infant population has increased. Cultural alterations may have profound consequences.*

Into this world and situation comes Gregory Chart.

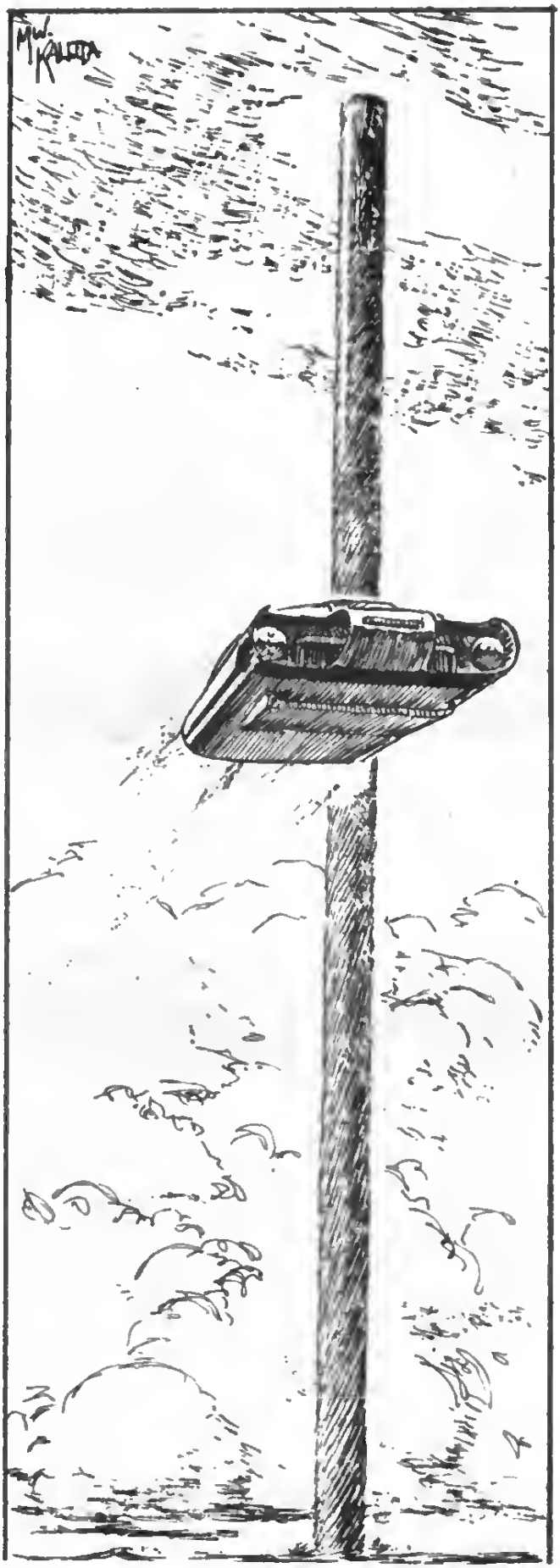
Chart is unique among humans—and perhaps the closest human equivilent to a dramaturge. He announces his arrival with celestial pomp and fireworks—massive auroral displays, abstract at first and then visual signs and portents. Then he lands his ship.

Chart's coming has profound effects upon the various members of the human enclave and Yannish population.

DR YIGAEL LEM *is greatly disturbed. A psychologist of great repute, he has heard about the displays Chart has put on for other worlds—one of which led to a massive uprising against that planet's rulers. He knows what has drawn Chart here: the chance to work his myth-manipulations for an alien audience, the capstone of the man's career. He very much opposes it, fearing the final destruction of the Yannish culture.*

MARC SIMON *has mixed emotions. He has left the human enclave and gone to live among the Yanfolk, with a Yannish mistress, Shyalee, and his greatest achievement to date is a translation of the Mutine Epics. He views himself idealistically, but without the weight of Dr Lem's many years of experience. He is young and naive—enough so that he considers taking the* sheyashrim *drug and participating in a* shrimashey, *despite the fact that it cannot affect him as it does the Yanfolk—and he has already become the second human being to go within the Mutine Mandala to experience the Mutine Flash, the prismatic noontime flash of light which is psychedelic in effect upon those humans who endure it directly, and has left them—both—wandering about for weeks with a bad case of sunburn before they came to their senses again. Marc knows now his translation of the* Epics *is a poor one, but it remains the best in existence.*

ALICE MING *has a Yannish lover, Rayvor-Harry, and an affectation for things Yannish which has brought to her a following of Yannish* apes, *but her role thus far has been to take Rayvor*



from another human woman years earlier . . .

Warden Chevsky is the only official of the human enclave, a largely ceremonial post from which he draws as much sustenance and bluster as he can. He drinks heavily and postures arrogantly. When Chart came, he was asleep in a dead drunk and his wife, Sidonie, left him there, alone, while she and the rest of the enclave went out to meet Chart's ship. Consequently, Chevsky is the last to rouse, last to find his way out to the unused spacefield, and in a more vile temper than usual upon arrival. He beats his wife as his first act of the day—and she leaves him without saying goodbye soon after.

Chevsky was awakened by Erik Svitra, a freelance drug tester who has heard rumors about sheyashrim and hopes to test it for profit, and who had just come off the go-board before Chart's arrival overhead. Unaware of Chart, Svitra wanders into town, finds it empty save for Warden Chevsky, wakes him and startles him with the news that he is the last man remaining there. Having done his first good deed of the day, Erik does his second by telling a wandering news-machine from Earth that someone named Gregory Chart seems to have arrived.

Dr Lem is invited into Chart's ship, where Chart tells him he has come to dramatise the Mutine legends for the Yanfolk—Lem's worst fears confirmed. But the real revelation is that Chart's mistress is Morag Feng—the human woman from whom Alice Ming had taken Reyvor-Harry, and the first human to experience the Mutine Flash. She has read Marc Simon's translation of the Mutine Epics, and she is the one who was responsible for Chart's interest in Yan.

Wandering outside the ship within an envelope of personal invisibility, she discovers Simon and brings him to Chart. There Chart reveals that he considers the Epics to be a technical manual, curiously analogous to the great works of Alchemy of Earth's distant past. They lack only a key to be understood—and the key is the twelfth Epic, the Mandala. Its flash of noontime light is a compressed burst of high-speed information—which Chart proposes to decipher in order to unlock the Epics. Chart asks Simon to help him, and presents his mission as an idealistic one. The elders of Yan, he reveals, want the re-creation of the Mutine Legends staged for all Yan to experience, in order that the impure culture of Earth may be expunged and balance restored. The commision, then, is not to destroy the final balance of Yannish culture, but to restore it.

In the meantime, two political factions are forming among the humans: those, grouped around Warden Chevsky, who want to exploit Chart—primarily via tourism from other planets—and encourage him; and those who have turned to Dr Lem as their spokesman, who want to see Chart stopped, who see him as a world-wrecking egomaniac. He must be stopped, they are convinced, from re-creating the Mutine Age!

XIV

"So now I have my first chance to see this famous Mutine Flash," Chart murmured, bringing the high-speed floater to a hover. Marc had not ridden in one of these for years, and never in such an advanced model: totally soundless, not betraying by the least quiver

or vibration that it was moving. No doubt this too was among the payment Chart had exacted from the planet Tubalcain.

The sun was just starting to tint the crystal shafts of the Mandala now. Chart had timed their arrival perfectly.

"Have you planted your detector?" Marc asked.

"Oh, yes." Chart squinted sidewise at the haloed sun. "But don't expect quick results, will you? It may take a score, perhaps a hundred superposed recordings before the signal can be extracted from the noise. That blur of dust around the sun must muddle the spectrum terribly."

"Here it comes!" Morag said from the rear seat of the vehicle.

Down the translucent pillars a kind of fire suddenly washed: the sum and epitome of everything men had ever admired in a well-cut jewel. Pure colours shone out like the boom of a bell, were thrust aside by others in bands, in stripes, in swirling curves. Pearly iridescences overlaid one upon another, and then they dissolved together into new hues, while the light behind them grew unbearably brilliant. Yet they could not tear their eyes away. For Marc—doubtless also for Morag—there were hurtful memories being awakened; no modern man or woman could enjoy remembering that he or she had gone insane.

Tantalisingly, a hint of meaning, of significance, rode the waves of colour, as though one were to chance on a worn rock half-buried in the ground and discern that there had once been an inscription on it, but in an alphabet whose last user was dead a thousand years.

A brief incredible dazzling tumult of visual glory—and it was over. The sun was past the zenith.

Chart exhaled loudly. Marc suspected he had held his breath throughout the thirty-six seconds of the Flash. Now he said in a tone of awe, "So much! And in so short a time! Why, it makes my little tricks with the aurora look like a—a baby's finger-painting!"

"You said it," Morag murmured. "I don't think you believed me really, did you? Until now!"

"I . . ." Chart sat back in his control-chair. "I guess I didn't. And these Yan-folk don't even bother to come and watch that?"

"I've never known any adult to come and watch it," Marc confirmed.

"Fantastic!" Seeming almost dazed, Chart shook his head. "You know I create sensory nuclei to assist my performances, don't you? Objects—constructs—which radiate various signals, heighten mood, predispose the public to the response I want . . . But I never contrived anything as spectacular as that!"

There was a short silence. Eventually he rubbed his eyes and took the floater's controls again. "Where next? Oh, yes. These things they call the Gladen Menhirs."

So: a complete survey of the relics. The Gladen Menhirs marching in a perfect line around the entire planet, on land and under water, at intervals of precisely thirty-two point four kilometres: identical masses of synthetic stone, each sixty-seven metres high by fourteen square, with rounded corners. The Mullom Wat, rising from the Ocean of Scand, humming gently as the wind played across its open top. A vast empty volume cut into a monstrous

rock, a kind of granite, with benches inside on which ten thousand Yanfolk might have sat in comfort, facing a blank wall. A spiral maze, like a seashell cut through the middle, leading in towards a central circle . . .and then out again. Going nowhere.

And onwards . . . It took a day and a night and a day to visit all the most important relics in the northern hemisphere alone; they ate while flying and slept during the traverse of the ocean, automatically awakened twice in order to circle down over mysterious little isolated objects poking out of the water, not as remarkable as the Mullom Wat but equally enigmatic.

And, at each halt, Chart revealed how thoroughly he had studied Yan before setting course for it. As an appendix to his translation of the Epics, Marc had included a list of tentative identifications of these relics with items referred to in the poem. Some were not at all hard to recognise; the Mutine Mandala appeared so many times that there was no room for argument, and the Mullom Wat and a few others were almost as unmistakable. Where problems began to arise was when there was a chance that the original relic mentioned in the text no longer survived—had been located in Kralgak, perhaps, and smashed by the rain of meteorites.

But Chart kept saying, after he had inspected a certain object, "Could that be the monument described in Book Six, where they're turning the forest back through time?" Or else: "That reminds me of the passage near the beginning of Book Two where the dramaturges meet in council on a high headland."

Marc sat there, marvelling, and doing his best to confirm or deny these enlightened guesses. Time and again Chart seemed to spot, instantly, something he himself had overlooked. With every passing minute he found himself becoming more impressed.

And then, eventually, Chart said, "Right! Now for the southern hemisphere."

Marc stared at him for a long moment. He said at last, "In—in this thing? You mean straight across Kralgak?"

"Why not? I want to see the southern relics, too. And of course I must take a look at the wilders."

"But . !" Marc's objection died on his lips as he glanced around the interior of the floater. Yes, a late-model Tubalcain floater probably could traverse Kralgak unharmed.

"Worried about the meteorites?" Morag murmured. "No need! You don't think I'd let Gregory risk his life, do you? Or mine! It's rather precious to me."

"Uh . . . Yes, of course. I guess I've been conditioned by associating with the Yanfolk. For them, of course, the mere idea of crossing Kralgak is unthinkable."

"I expect it to be quite an impressive trip," Chart said. "But nothing short of a twenty-ton rock could even displace this floater from its course. We'll cross the ocean, though, rather than Kralgak proper. According to my sources, the densest concentration of wilders is to be found along the nearer shore of the southern continent, and from here we can fly a Great Circle course direct to where they live."

Despite his best intentions, when Marc saw the white foam on the deep blue water ahead, marking the limit of the zone where the meteorites pelted

continually down, he had to brace himself, and his knuckles grew white on the arms of his seat. But Chart betrayed no tension—only a hint of excitement. Now and then he lifted an eyebrow to comment on an especially large splash. The whole sky, as they drew closer, seemed to be threaded with irregular streaks of fire, and there was a faint jar and Marc glanced up in alarm to find that a pebble had smashed on the transparent canopy of the floater. And there beyond was the daylight shimmer of the Ring, just visible through the blue blur of the sky: a faint, faint white band—

Another pebble struck, and he winced. He heard Morag chuckle. Annoyed with himself, he turned his gaze downward, and there saw the water roiling and churning, exactly as though a fast current were pouring it over rapids.

But it was at its deepest here. The rocks nearest the surface must be a good hundred metres down.

"Magnificent," Chart said. "Absolutely magnificent."

And Yes, in a way it is. Marc had to concede that. Not that it was compensation for losing half a planet.

"There!" Chart exclaimed suddenly, and threw up his arm towards the zenith. A vast lump of rock, weighing tons, was blasting downward to the right of their course, leaving a blinding stripe of white across the air. When it struck the water, there was a colossal explosion, and a fountain of steam shot hundreds of metres into the air. Wind caught the spray, and for a brief instant the canopy of the floater was smeared with wet, before the automatic cleansing mechanism restored it to perfect transparency.

"I wish I could get some really clear conception of the Yanfolk as they were in their great period," Chart muttered. "I have this fairly accurate picture of the dramaturges, I think, but it's the survivors I'm puzzled by. Marc!"

"Yes?"

"Marc, you know humans. Imagine some great disaster overtaking mankind back on Earth, before the go-board. Imagine—oh, say a war! You do know what a war is?"

"Yes."

"Or any other kind of major disaster which overwhelmed the contemporary version of civilisation. Could you believe in mankind being so disheartened that they abandoned all hope of reconstruction?"

"I—I guess I could," Marc said. "But only if they were reduced to savagery, like the wilders."

"Yes, exactly. These wilders we're going to look at are typical of what might have happened to mankind, although even in that case I'd have expected them to begin again after a few centuries, not remain in apathetic barbarism for ten thousand years." The rain of fire continued on all sides, the ocean below seethed and surged, but he was no longer looking at it. "The civilised Yanfolk, though! Incredible! Relinquishing the—the *cream* of their achievements, as it were, and apparently being content with mere existence from that day forward."

"Not altogether content," Morag said from the rear.

"You mean these apes?" Chart said over his shoulder. "I know. There is discontent, that's plain enough. But it took contact with mankind to spark it, and what's a century compared to the previous nine and a half millennia? It's

almost as though the dramaturges were a different species, isn't it? The spearhead of the race, as you might say. A small group in which all initiative, originality, inventiveness had been concentrated, and when they disappeared . . ." A gesture like spilling sand from his palm. "Yet they were the same species, weren't they?"

"I don't know that anyone has ever suggested they were not," Marc said.

"And the wilders?"

"I've never seen any myself," Marc admitted. "But there are recordings you can dial from the informat. Physically they're identical with the rest of the Yanfolk, except that they're sometimes stunted, or diseased."

"I see," Chart nodded. "Ah! Clearer water ahead. We must be through the meteorite zone."

Another pebble smashed on the canopy. But it made no more impression than the others. The floater continued unperturbed on its course.

They found a tribe of wilders less than half an hour after encountering the coast of the southern continent. Chart had put the floater into the anti-see mode, and it was neither visible nor audible as it drifted gently down along the reddish sandy shore. There were about twenty or twenty-five in the tribe they discovered: all naked, except for garlands of leaves around their necks and waists, and about equally divided between men and women. They had two children with them, but these were both very young and being carried.

They were hunting for buried sandworms, using sharpened sticks or their toes to rout the creatures out of their burrows. The moment they discovered them, they ate them. Only two of them carried them away from the spot where they were located; both these were men, who ran to the women carrying the children and handed over about half their spoils.

"Fathers?" Chart inquired.

"Not likely," Marc decided when he had thought about it for a moment. "I seem to recall something about this in the informat recordings. They take turns in providing for the children. It's a kind of rudimentary version of the northern pattern. You know that newborn children are dispatched in a special container called a *kortch* to a relative in another city, and may not see their natural parents again until they're five or six years old?"

"Of course. I studied up on Yannish familial relationships." Chart was peering down with concentration at the wilders. "Yes, they do look physically very much like the northerners. Let's see if we can hear them talking, shall we?"

He flipped a control. Marc could not see anything happening; he asked what it was for.

"I've sent out an anti-see monitor," Chart said. "And by the sound of it, there's not much talking going on, is there? Here!" He turned a knob, and there was a sudden soft sound in the cabin, the splash of wavelets on the beach, modified now and then by the brushing of feet among the low-lying liminal vegetation.

"And they have no weapons," he mused. "And only tools for crude jobs like digging. Correct?"

Marc nodded.

"I think they'll do fine," Chart declared suddenly. "But we'll have to make doubly certain, of course. Let's pick up that one who's wandered out

of sight of the rest." He pointed with one hand to a male who had gone behind a large boulder, and with the other hand tapped a pattern of instructions on the control-board.

The man rose abruptly into the air, seeming to yell, and vanished.

"What are you doing?" Marc demanded.

"Just studying him, seeing if he's suitable," Chart answered absently. "Hmm! Yes, physically in fair shape—a bit undernourished, but that could be rectified . . . Oh, yes! These wilders will do very well, if he's a typical specimen."

"Do very well—for what?" Marc said slowly. A cold, unpleasant suspicion was burgeoning at the back of his mind.

"To be pithed and programmed, of course," Chart sighed. "I don't have facilities to make up Yannish androids, do I? It'd be hell's own job arranging for that, and expensive, too. But we've got to have programmed actors available, to take the dramaturge roles when the performance gets under way."

"Now let me get this straight." Marc bit his lip. "You're proposing to pith these wilders? To—decorticate them?"

"I just told you!" Chart snapped. "We shall *have* to have programmed actors!"

There was a dead silence, apart from the clicking of the instruments which were continuing to analyse the bodily condition of the captive.

"Take me back to Prell," Marc said at last.

Chart stared at him.

"I said take me back to Prell," he repeated. "I won't have anything whatever to do with this!" He clenched his fists.

"Marc, be reasonable!" Morag said, sitting forward.

"You heard me!" Marc roared. "Come on! Put that poor devil back on the ground, and take me home!"

XV

WHAT ARE WE—SUPPLICANTS?

Walking stiffly at the head of the little delegation, self-appointed, on the way to visit Speaker Kaydad, Dr Lem found the question recurring and recurring in his mind. At his side Hector Ducci marched with determined, heavy steps; the Shigarakus, Harriet and Pedro brought up the rear. One last hope remained, they agreed, before they turned to Earth for assistance which was unlikely to be forthcoming. An appeal to Chart was certain to fail; an appeal to Chevsky was absurd, because he had already convinced himself that to have Chart perform on Yan while he was warden of the enclave would make him famous, perhaps lead to him being transferred to a major post on another planet.

But an appeal to the Yanfolk might—just *might* . . .

"We're almost there, aren't we?" Toshi said from behind him. He nodded. They had passed the tenuous border between the human and the Yannish zones of Prell about five minutes ago. Now they were surrounded not by the cuboidal, dogmatic shapes of human architecture, but by the almost egg-like forms of Yannish homes, their flat open roofs hidden by curved upper walls, their exterior almost featureless because the focus of their layout was inward, centered on the atrium and the pool, or the flowerbeds, or the carvings, or

whatever other items the owners had selected as particularly to their taste.

"Where is everybody?" Ducci muttered. "I never saw the streets so empty before!"

"Can't you smell?" Harriet answered. "They're making *sheyashrim*." She sniffed exaggeratedly.

"What?" Ducci copied her. "Why—why, yes! I hadn't noticed before, but I guess that's the third or fourth house we've passed where I could smell it."

"More like thirtieth or fortieth," Jack Shigaraku said sourly, quickening his stride for a moment and coming up alongside Ducci and Dr Lem. "They must be brewing it by the barrelful."

There was silence among them for a moment as they all thought of that potent drug being prepared in such colossal quantities. Ordinarily, it was only required for the day following a birth, when—as though by an impulse from the collective racial subconscious of the Yanfolk—it was drunk ceremoniously among groups of responsible adults, who there-upon lapsed into wild animal dancing and ultimately into a rioting mass of crushed-together bodies.

"Is this something to do with Chart's plan?" Toshi asked when they had gone another few paces. Her husband shook his head.

"I've no idea. Yigael?"

Dr Lem sighed. "According to Marc's translation of the Mutine Epics, the *sheyashrim* drug was developed by the dramaturges just prior to their great undertaking. But I'm afraid I've never read the Epics in the original. I can only take his word for it."

"That bastard!" Toshi said with venom. "Obsessed, that's what he is! Throwing his lot in with Chart, the way he has—doesn't he realise what he's helping to bring about?"

Dr Lem gave her a sidelong glare. He said, "Marc has never been kindly treated by the people of the enclave, has he? And you and Jack have been among those who treated him worst."

"Now just a moment—" Jack began.

"I mean it!" With uncharacteristic force Dr Lem tilted his head back and stared the tutor in the eyes. "I know you prize human culture, I know you're angry because he seemed to prefer Yannish company to that of his own kind. But he committed himself to his chosen course for a purpose. And before this is all over, I predict we're going to be grateful for his comprehension of Yannish. Let's face it! Without his translation of the Mutine Epics, what else would we have to tell us what's likely to happen?"

"Without it, would Chart have been attracted to Yan?" Jack snapped.

"If he had ever conceived the notion of performing for a non-human audience, he would have picked on Yan as a logical first choice," Dr Lem insisted.

"More to the point," Harriet put in, "it was Morag Feng who brought Chart here, not Marc. That's what we have to reckon with."

"Do you think she's here for revenge?" Pedro asked.

"No. For something far more dangerous. Justification for her own stupidity."

"There's Kaydad's house," Dr Lem said, pointing. "And they're expecting us." The gloglobe at its door was green, to show that an appointment had been made with distinguished visitors, and casual callers should return at another time.

Vetcho was with the Speaker, which was to be expected. So was Goydel,

which was not. With the utmost in stiff formality they welcomed the visitors and seated them on the traditional Yannish cushions. The atrium here was unique, so far as Dr Lem knew, and he had never liked it. Instead of a pool in the centre, or a statue, or a flowering bush, it had a well, about four metres by two and at least twelve deep, with neither rails nor even a kerb around it.

He tried to look at the wall-hung tapestries instead, woven of coloured reeds.

But all was not as it should be. He detected that as soon as he entered, because the air was full of the scent of *sheyashrim*, and he knew the others had noticed it as well. And then the Speaker's matron offered, by way of refreshment, ghul-nut cordial.

It was delicious. But to a human it was poisonous. Even one cup induced stomach-cramps, and about three deliriums.

A snub. A carefully weighed and deliberate snub.

The preliminaries took, for a group this size, around fifteen or twenty minutes. After that, when the matron withdrew, Kaydad should have broached the subject of his visitors' business in their own language—Yannish having been used up to that point, a standard courtesy.

He stuck to Yannish.

As you like, Dr Lem sighed inwardly, and hoped that his own rather shaky command of the language would not lead to misunderstandings.

"This is the planet of the Yanfolk, not of humans, and we have altered certain of our customs to accord with those of your people," he said. "There is a matter of considerable gravity to be discussed. So far as it is concerned, I am *Elgadrin*." He employed the term normally rendered "Speaker."

"While one would not wish to cast doubt upon the assertion of one making such an important statement . . ." That was Vetcho. He'd been afraid it might be. Vetcho was notoriously far more conservative and chauvinistic than Kaydad.

"One would draw to present-time attention the existence of a person bearing a title, namely 'Warden'."

"The office held by Warden Chevsky relates to affairs in the human enclave, not to relationships between our two species. Routine administrative matters can be dealt with by him for convenience. The matter being discussed is not routine." Dr Lem wanted to wipe his face, but decided he should not do so. So far, though, he was making his points in good clear Yannish. If only he could keep up the standard.

He wished irrelevantly he hadn't had to leave Pompy at home. But the Yanfolk had never, seemingly, kept pets, and inviting an animal to join the company was a grave insult.

"That matter being ?" Kaydad, now.

"The re-creation by Gregory Chart of the Mutine Age."

The humans tensed. They had been prepared for a far longer session of preamble. Dr Lem could tell from their deliberately calm faces that they were worried about the impact of this blunt statement.

Eventually Kaydad said, his face as frozen as a stone mask, "That matter is undebatable."

The word was far more forcible. It was in the philosophical negative mode, the mode of absolute denial reserved

for such statements as universal categorical nulls.

"That it has no existence?" hazarded Dr Lem, groping among the shredded remains of his formal Yannish, which he had studied thoroughly during his first five or ten years on the planet, and lately neglected. "Or that it has no—uh—referents in speech?"

The two were clearly separable in this ancient, complex tongue.

"That it has no referents permitting argument," Goydel said. The others signified concurrence.

"In other words," Dr Lem said in his own language, "it's going to be done whether or not we approve."

Silence.

"I see," he went on eventually. "It has therefore come to this: that the once-proud Yanfolk have so far despaired of recapturing their ancient glory, they must hire a human to help them."

And waited. In memory he could hear Chart's mocking voice saying that because he had spent so long among the Yanfolk he had forgotten how to frame an insult. That might be true in his own speech. In Yannish, however, he obviously knew very well how to be rude. He had never seen any of the Yanfolk so furious before. Goydel was trembling, his hands curled into fists. Kaydad was working his mouth as though trying to speak, and failing. Only Vetcho had enough command of his own body to rise, and he, the moment he was on his feet, flung out his arm towards the street door.

"Go!" he ordered. *"Go!"*

"Get up slowly," Dr Lem muttered from the corner of his mouth. "Don't hurry. Move as though you don't give a damn for Yan or Yanfolk. Don't say goodbye, just leave."

The others, nervous, complied.

Rising himself, limbs stiff and awkward, Dr Lem said more loudly, "What a shame. When I first came here, I believed there to be a pride." It was more than pride; it was that, plus *amour propre*, plus self-respect, plus a sense of honour, plus, plus, plus . . . "One sees now that this cannot be supported unless an alien expert is hired to underpin it. A shame. A considerable disappointment. Perhaps one will go look for a more rewarding planet."

He had his back to the three Yanfolk by the time he concluded. Toshi and Harriet had passed through the exit, and Jack and Ducci were following. A hand fell on his thin shoulder. Perhaps it was the first time a Yannish hand had gripped a human in anger.

And in anger it certainly was. He was whipped around to confront Vetcho, dark eyes blazing in the pale masklike upper portion of his face.

"Go or stay, as you wish!" he rasped. "You say we *hired* this human, this Gregory Chart? Deluded fool! We don't understand your notion of 'hiring', paying someone to do what he doesn't want! He came here to ask us for our help in planning something *he* desires to do! We have been pleased to grant it, because we have something you do not, something you never will have, and at long last one of you, one human, has recognised its genuine worth."

In the doorway Pedro and Ducci had paused, ready to free Dr Lem by force if need be.

But Vetcho dropped his hand, breathing hard.

"It may take a thousand years for you to understand what we are, what we learned how to do," he said. "Or you

may never understand. Perhaps if you do you will not be so contemptuous, arrogant, overweening. We discovered our limitations long ago, and we decided to live within them. When, if ever, do you hope to achieve as much?"

He thrust Dr Lem through the door and slammed it behind him.

When they had gone fifty paces down the street Pedro cleared his throat.

"Oonagh and I," he said, referring to his wife, "have been thinking about getting ourselves a go-board pattern. So we can keep out of the way while this —this performance lasts. Put the store on auto, of course."

"It may last months," Dr Lem said.

"I know." Jack clenched his fists. "We've been thinking of closing the school, too—this will be no place for kids—but you can't make the parents understand. Chevsky and his pals got to most of them at once. Biggest event in the history of Yan, of course your kids must witness it, something to talk about when they grow up!"

"We'll have to recommend it formally," Jack said. "Do you realise they're already playing *shrimashey*, those kids?"

Hector Ducci said bluffly, "Of course! I recall Zepp playing it, years ago!"

"It was all right when it was just an excuse for some body contact and mutual exploration," Toshi said. "But now they seem to feel the game doesn't come out right unless at least one kid winds up unconscious."

"I didn't know about that!" Ducci exclaimed. "Did you, Yigael?"

"Naturally," Dr Lem sighed. "So did Harriet, who has to dress the bruises afterwards. It's most disturbing."

"So are you going across the board too?"

"I don't think so. I'm old. And—and I wouldn't want to feel Chart had driven me off the planet where I've spent more than thirty years."

In another few minutes they dispersed to their respective homes, having agreed gloomily that now there was absolutely no other course open except to file a direct request on Earth for intervention by the government. And they had already learned, via the informat, that there was at most a one in ten chance of any action. Earth was remote, uninterested, incapable of ruling any of its daughter worlds, content to remain on speaking terms with them.

"If worst comes to worst," Jack said as they parted, "we shall have to send a delegate physically to Earth, to lobby the High Senate. That might help."

It might. But, as he greeted the anxious Pompy, Dr Lem could not convince himself that it would.

He wandered on to his verandah, as his custom was, and stared around. There was a faint haze over the go-board; it was active again. No doubt from now on there would be hordes of people heading for Yan, hoping to see this unprecedented event, this performance by Chart for an alien species—

Behind him, a call on the communet. He picked the floating extension out of the air and found Ducci looking at him.

"Yigael, Marc Simon came home."

"How do you know?" Last heard of, he had vanished into Chart's ship, gone as completely as if he had been digested.

"I planted a remote alarm there, keyed to him. When I came in just now I found it signalling. He's not alone,

either. The other person's female, but not Yannish. It definitely can't be Shyalee."

"Morag Feng?" Dr Lem tensed.

"I think that's the likeliest. But I can't pick up enough detail to be certain."

"He's not plugged into the communet there, is he? Can I call him over this remote of yours?"

"I'm afraid not. I could dispatch an extension if you like, but—"

"No," Dr Lem said with sudden decision. "I'll go call on him. If anyone might make Chart see reason, it would be one of those two."

"You don't have much chance of persuading Morag Feng!"

"I guess not." Dr Lem tried not to sound as hopeless as he felt. "But perhaps Marc."

XVI

"SHYALEE?" MARC CALLED. The house was in darkness—but of course on Yan it was never completely dark. There was always the shimmer of the Ring, even on a cloudy night.

He closed the street door behind him and advanced into the atrium. On his favourite stone seat overlooking the pool, a slim dark silhouette.

"Shyalee!" he cried.

"I'm sorry. No." The figure rose slowly. "It's Alice Ming."

"What are you doing here?" He strode toward her. "And where *is* Shyalee?"

"I don't know. But she won't be back here, I'm certain." Now Alice was in plain sight, her face grey in the silver radiance from the sky.

"I don't understand!" Marc burst out.

"Harry quit me." Alice's voice sounded as though she had wept for a long time, until there were no tears left. "And Shyalee has quit you. I was told so. By Harry. Oh—I'm wrong. That was force of habit, of course, calling him Harry. He's told me he is now Rayvor again, and will remain Rayvor permanently."

The fountain splashed under the words, like the muttering of an idiot who has stumbled across a sound that especially pleases him and will not stop repeating it.

"But why?"

Because of what they believe Chart is going to do, of course! They believe that he's going to call back the dramaturges, re-create the golden age of Yan! They believe it's going to be real, and they'll have something real to be proud of!"

"Then they're crazy," Marc said slowly. "It will be what Chart's work always is, an elaborate drama. And when the performance ends—"

"Not here," Alice said. "Not on Yan. That's the way it is among humans. But Harry—I mean Rayvor explained it to me. Carefully. Speaker Kaydad had called him in, and Shyalee, and told them just what the difference is."

A huge growing coldness was forming in Marc's belly. He said, "And ?"

"I didn't understand." Alice put her hand to her head and swayed a little. "He did tell me. He told me in Yannish, though. He said he never wanted to speak our language again. But the one thing he did say, over and over, was this: he said Chart would not be human when he finished. He said the greatest human artist was going to become an imitator of the Yanfolk. An ape, the other way around."

"Who else have you told, Alice?" Marc said at last.

"No one. I thought perhaps you would be the—the likeliest to understand." She checked, and gave him a curious stare. "Where have you been?"

"On a grand tour of the ancient relics with Chart and his mistress."

"Is she—is she really the same Morag Feng who was here so long ago. ?"

"Apparently." Marc had been so preoccupied, he had almost forgotten what he knew of that stale scandal.

"And is she determined to revenge herself for what I did?"

"I don't know." His tone was curter than he had intended.

"You're right," Alice said, passing her hand through her hair. "I shouldn't concern myself for something that can't any longer be helped. The best we can hope for now is to pick up a few of the pieces afterwards . Why did you come home? Just before you arrived, I was telling myself it was stupid to sit here in the dark expecting you, because you'd have heard about Shyalee and you'd have gone to the enclave again."

"I came back because Chart intends to take wilders and remove their brains, and programme them artificially to act out the role of dramaturges in his play."

"But—but that would be horrible!" Alice cried. "They're savages, but they're—they're living creatures! They're not dummies!"

"They will be when Chart gets at them," Marc said. "I was so revolted I told him to bring me home. I won't have anything more to do with the man." He shuddered. "And you know the worst thing? He literally didn't seem to understand my objection! All the way from the wilder continent he kept demanding, over and over, what I was so annoyed about!"

He pulled himself together by main force. "Well, I guess there's one obvious person we can go and talk to, and that's Dr Lem. Come on."

He put his arm around her and led her, quivering, out of the house.

"Aren't you Dr Lem?"

The voice was unfamiliar. For an instant he thought the chubby brown man who had hailed him was freshly off the go-board; then he realised it was this Erik Svitra, who had in fact arrived the other day and been adopted—according to rumour, without noticeable enjoyment—by Warden Chevsky.

"Yes?" Dr Lem said, pausing as he was about to turn a corner.

Erik came scurrying up to him. "Sorry to bother you, doc, but as a matter of fact I was on my way to see you." He swallowed hard. "I want to . . . Well, I want to apologise to someone. And I can't think of anyone except you. I mean, I had just enough credit to get me off this planet, just enough for a short go-board trip, and I'm getting out, but when I was on my way to the board I thought hell, a lot of this is my fault . . Have you seen what it's like on the board right now? It's just flashing and flashing. People are pouring in!"

Dr Lem stared at him in the light of the nearby glo-globes. "Why are you leaving?" he demanded.

"Well, mainly I tipped off that news-machine, didn't I? So lots of people are going to come here, wanting to have their heads blown apart by this performance of Chart's, and—hell, doc! The whole idea simply scares me silly! I can't explain. But I just thought, before I leave, I ought to tell someone

I'm sorry, I didn't realise what I was doing."

He wrung his hands miserably. "Well, that's all, I guess—"

"There he is!" A call from down the street. They both turned. Hurrying towards them were Marc and Alice, holding hands.

"Why, I was coming to call on you," Dr Lem said gratefully. "Is that ?" Peering through the multicoloured twilight, he checked. "Oh, it's Alice. Hello. Marc, I was coming to ask you—"

"Chart's going to do a terrible thing," Alice interrupted. "He's going to kidnap wilders and pith them, turn them into puppets for him."

Erik put his hand to his mouth. "These wilders—they're like the cousins of the natives here in Prell? I saw about them on the 'net; they got lots of recordings. But they're intelligent, aren't they? Got a language of a kind, got tools and things!"

He rounded on Dr Lem. "Say! They got laws against that, haven't they?"

"As a matter of fact they have," Dr Lem said. A great weight seemed to have dropped from him. "And oddly enough it was partly Chart's doing that they were passed. Explorers from Hyrax, sent out by the Quains, had caused such a scandal by capturing and exhibiting non-human intelligent lifeforms that when they'd been deposed the successor government found no opposition at all when they tried to put such crimes into the galactic common-statute list. It's an offence on any inhabited planet to do what you just described. Here! Come on up to my place and let's consult the communet."

He swung around and set off the way he had come, his steps suddenly much brisker.

"And, come to think of it," he added when he had gone a few metres, "if you're leaving here anyhow, I wonder if you'd be willing to go—wherever you're going—by way of Earth."

Erik gaped at him. He said, "Clear to Earth from Yan? But that's almost the longest trip you can make across the go-board! Where'd I get the credit for a programme like that?"

"It could be arranged. In principle, though?"

"Hell, I've wanted to visit Earth ever since I was a kid! Mostly I have to go where I'm sent, though, by the drug-merchants I mainly work for."

"Then you have no need to worry about costs. I can programme you; it's a matter of elementary hypnotic indoctrination." Dr Lem hesitated. "There would be a condition, of course."

"I might have guessed. Hurt me with it."

"That you make it your first business, on arrival, to contact the committee on human-alien relations of the High Planetary Senate and report in detail on Chart's plans."

"That's all?" Erik said incredulously. "Why, sure! And cheap at the price!"

"Good." Dr Lem strode up the steps to the door of his house and pushed open the door. Pompy came crooning to meet him. Since he had been bound for the Yannish section of Prell he had left her at home.

Lights sprang up. Automatics whirred faintly, sensing the number of visitors and activating the services. "If you want refreshment, help yourselves," Dr Lem said, and headed straight for the communet console. Almost as he sat down his busy hands were engaged on its board.

"You know," Erik said, watching curiously over his shoulder, "that was the first thing that struck me about this here enclave of yours. You got communet facilities like I never saw anyplace else. Just for these—how many?—three hundred people and a few kids?"

"There's a purpose behind it," Dr Lem answered briefly. "You're quite right—these facilities are as advanced as what you find on Tubalcain, and in fact that's where the system was designed and built. The informat is so big, it could cope with a city of six or eight million people. Ah!"

On the screen, data flashed: "Galactic Common Statutes," and then a string of sub-heads. He punched the number of the one he wanted.

"Let him get on with it," Marc said, and Erik complied, turning away and coming to sit down on the big soft horseshoe-shaped settle in the centre of the room. Alice had leaned back and closed her eyes; there was an unhappy downward turn to the corners of her mouth.

"The communet has to be very comprehensive," Marc went on. "Matter of fact, it was partly because of the 'net that I moved out of reach of it, out of the enclave. Consider: here's this little community of humans, three hundred and some as you just commented, with no contact except via the go-board with any other human world—and you don't just make a go-board trip without preparation, on the spur of the moment. You have to be programmed with a hypnotic route-map, as it were. A long one may take hours and call for a very skilled practitioner to implant it firmly, especially if you're not a first-rate subject—"

"Don't tell me!" Erik said with a wince. "I used to be a fine subject. Then I ran into some stuff called *gifmak*, and . . ." He mopped his plump brown face. "Never mind. What I mean, I get tired much more easily now. Still, if I have the chance to visit Earth for free, I'll risk it. Go on about the 'net you have here. Sounds kind of interesting."

"Well, it's to counteract the effects of isolation, you see. And, maybe more to the point, the pressure from this very stable, very strong Yannish culture next door. It got at me. In fact it's still there, right under my skin, so deep that half the time I find myself thinking sort of wistfully, 'I'd love to see the golden age of Yan brought to life! There's nothing I want more!' Which is true enough. I just don't want it so much that I can help Chart do this monstrous thing he was talking about."

"He actually wanted you to help him?"

"Oh, not literally wanted me to help catch the wilders—just to sort out the ambiguities and metaphors in the Mutine Epics which he's going to use as a script. Hey!" Marc sat bolt upright. "Dr Lem!"

"What is it?" Not looking around.

"Did you know that Shyalee left me, and Rayvor left Alice?"

"I hadn't heard. I can guess the reason, though. Have they been convinced that there's now a grand undertaking among their own people which they can join in?"

"More or less."

Dr Lem nodded and gave the board a final tap before turning his back on it. He looked very tired. He said, "I think it has adequate material. I've asked for a simulated verdict assuming that we send Erik here to Earth and apply for an injunction to protect the

wilders from Chart."

"Will it take long?" Marc asked.

"A minute or two, perhaps. By the way! Did I hear you say that Chart plans to use the Mutine Epics as the script for his performance? Can he? I'd always believed that even the *hrath* group among the Yanfold didn't fully understand the text."

"Chart thinks he's found the twelfth book, the key which turns the Epics into a technical manual."

Dr Lem started. He rotated his chair again, and tapped on the communet board. "Where did he locate it? Did the Yanfolk give it to him?"

"He thinks it's compressed into the Mutine Flash."

Dr Lem stopped dead-still for an instant, then went on tapping. "Very ingenious," he said under his breath. "And it could so easily be true. So easily! If the dramaturges wanted to leave a guide for their descendants . Only the dust garbles the solar spectrum, correct?"

"That's what he thinks," Marc confirmed with genuine respect.

"Hmm! I wonder if it's even more than a set of instructions, then. I wonder if it could be a continual reinforcement, like our communet . You were asking about that just now, Erik. Marc was quite right to say it's a defence against pressure from our Yannish neighbours. Without it, there'd be a risk of people drifting away. For example, you've no doubt heard that sexual relations with a Yannish partner can be extraordinarily gratifying, and that fact alone would have been explosive even without the constant awareness of the relics, some of which we couldn't duplicate and none of which we understand."

"You mean," Erik said slowly, "this here enclave wasn't set up, like I assumed, to let the Yanfolk adjust to us humans, find out if they could stand living in our company. You make it sound exactly the opposite."

"Correct." Dr Lem gave a sad smile. "It's to find out whether we can put up with the Yanfolk."

"You're joking!" Erik said, wide-eyed. "What could these backward—?"

A voice from the communet interrupted him. "This is your informat speaking. Owing to data just coded into my banks by Dr Yigael Lem I have transmitted to Earth an orange emergency signal. Take no further action, repeat no further action, until instructed from Earth. The warden has been routinely informed of this alert."

Stunned silence. Erik was the first to break it. He said, "Well, then, I guess I don't get my trip to Earth after all."

XVII

TEN MINUTES LATER there was uproar. First to react, naturally, was Chevsky himself, who called up in such a state of fury that he could barely choke out coherent words. Marc, Alice and Erik sat nervously at Dr Lem's back while the old man patiently repeated, altogether five or six times, that this "orange alert" had been as much a surprise to him as to the warden.

"Instead of going on at me," he snapped finally, his patience exhausted, "why don't you ask the informat what it involves? I never heard of any such thing before!"

Chevsky, gulping great draughts of air, gave a vigorous nod. "I'll *do* that! And don't you try making any more trouble! We're sick of your self-right-

eous meddling, understand?"

The screen blanked. Almost in the same instant, there was a distant white flash through the window which gave a view of the Northern Range: the first of the summer storms was breaking out. The timing was so apt, one could almost have believed that the dramaturges were indeed returning to transform their planet into what the Mutine Epics claimed it once had been, a single centrally conceived work of art.

And then Ducci called, to say that the go-board had been remotely preempted by a trigger-signal from Earth, of which of course he as technical director had at once been notified, and to ask what in the galaxy was going on—and some of Dr Lem's neighbours, in hastily-donned gowns, came from bed to put the same question face to face—and in the end the old man had to throw up his hands helplessly, and plead with them all to wait and find out.

But the next development was even more startling. From the spot where it had rested since its original landing, Chart's ship soared upward silently and began to drift in a north-westerly direction.

"He's not going away, is he?" Marc said, having run to the window which faced the ship. "I guess that would be too much to hope for!"

"No, that's a local course," Dr Lem said. "I'm an old man, Marc, and there were still many starships when I was young. I've seen them on atmospheric courses before. He's just removing himself from our vicinity. Putting himself under the inarguable jurisdiction of the Yanfolk."

"What Harry told me—I mean what Rayvor told me," Alice said softly, "was that when he was finished here Chart would have become a copy of the Yanfolk. An ape in reverse."

"I think it's only too likely," Dr Lem said. "I was never so sure of the possibility that I made specific inquiries, but now I can see it's always been hanging over us—the risk that any social system strong enough to control millions of people for thousands of years might also be strong enough to take control of isolated humans."

"I don't get that," Erik said in a puzzled tone.

"Don't you?" Marc rounded on him, clenching his fists. "Hell, it's what could so easily have happened to me! Being caught up, being *digested*, into an alien pattern! There have been hints that this was happening, and I never realised until now. Dr Lem, there are only a few children in the enclave, aren't there?"

"Right. And those few play at *shrimashey*, until one or more of them get crushed unconscious under the pile." Dr Lem wiped his face with the back of his hand. The night was not particularly warm, but they were all perspiring.

Suddenly, through the window facing the direction of the go-board, there was a brilliant blue glow which lit up the sky more brightly than the Ring. Erik jumped.

"What's that?"

"Unless I'm much mistaken, the arrival of the biggest consignment ever to use the Yan go-board," Dr. Lem said. "A large party of humans, and a lot of equipment. Perhaps we ought to go and meet them on their way into Prell."

He was right in two respects. The party was enormous—more than a hundred people—and it was accompa-

nied by a vast deal of equipment, most of which was autonomic and floated around under its own control like obstinate thistledown. He was wrong, though, about them heading for Prell. They made immediately towards the informat dome, and by the time Dr Lem and his companions arrived they found that Ducci, Chevsky, and several other people from the enclave were already present.

The dome, naturally, was not guarded. Anyone could enter it at any time. It was proofed by a coating of impervium against the risk of meteorites striking this far north of Kralgak, and its internal circuitry was all very solid-state indeed. Apart from its consultation consoles, its interior was featureless, a single hollow volume of a pleasant yellow material, normally visited only by an occasional maintenance worker, except when it was used for town meetings.

But now it was alive with strangers, who all seemed to know exactly what they were here for and were busy with mysterious little portable devices, touching the walls and floor, calling to one another in obscure technical jargon, discussing problems in little groups of three to six. Bewildered, Dr Lem stopped dead in the entrance and looked about him. He had forgotten to tell Pompy not to follow him, had only realised she had picked up his scent when he was already several hundred metres from home, and had decided against taking her back there. Now she lowered herself flush to the floor, all her legs tightly folded, and stared about her with the same astonished intensity as her master.

"This looks like," Marc began as he too took in the scene, and had to hesitate to be sure he was choosing the right image—"this looks like a military operation."

"I'm not quite sure what that means," Alice muttered. "Is it . . . ? Oh! You mean Yan is under attack?"

"I think it's more likely to be defended," Marc said. "Try and keep up with Dr Lem."

But Dr Lem wasn't going any further than the point he had just reached, for a tall woman in blue—dark-haired, dark-skinned, dark-eyed, with an authoritative manner, carrying a shoulder-mounted data-unit in a sleek blue case—had spotted him and forced her way through the unexpected crowd to confront him. She said, "You're Yigael Lem!"

"Ah . . . Yes, so I am."

"My name is Trita Garsonova." The data-unit was talking quietly, without interruption, to her right ear. "You filed information concerning a plan by Greory Chart to pith and programme intelligent primitives."

"Was that what brought this—this army here?"

"Naturally. Did you learn of this plan personally?"

"No, I heard of it from Marc Simon over there—"

"There he is!" A bull roar from among the crowd, and Warden Chevsky came shouldering his way towards Dr Lem. "Just let me get my hands on that little—"

"Stop," said the woman in blue. She did something with a device hung from the belt of her tight coverall, and Chevsky stopped, his feet walking absurdly on the spot. He gaped at her.

"But I'm the warden here!" he burst out.

"You've just been indicted for gross

dereliction of duty," the woman said. "You'll have a hearing. But any Earth-sider temporarily on Yan is automatically under your jurisdiction, and as far as we can make out from the informat records here you not only haven't attempted to prevent Chart committing this disgusting crime, but you've actively encouraged him."

"I didn't know about—"

"Shut up," Garsonova said, and made another adjustment to her belt. Chevsky's mouth continued to move, but no sound reached them. Belatedly, Dr Lem recognised the effects of a police muffler. It had been almost forty years since he last encountered one.

There are advantages in living on Yan. Things like that can safely be forgotten.

"Good! Now Ah yes: that's Marc Simon—and that's Alice Ming, according to my data—and that's The brown man, the plump one?"

"A recent arrival. Erik Svitra."

"Oh, yes. A drug-tester. Did he come here to try and exploit *sheyashrim*?"

Dr Lem blinked, startled. "I'm not sure. I think perhaps yes. Uh—how do you know about the drug?"

Garsonova regarded him with cold eyes. She said, "Who in the galaxy do you think I am, doctor?"

"I—I've no idea. This is all so unprecedented!"

"And unprecedented things aren't part of the Yannish pattern," Garsonova nodded. "*I* see. No wonder you left it so long before you started putting pertinent data into your informat! I'm beginning to wonder why we bothered to set up such an elaborate device here; no one seems to have taken advantage of it! Still, you do appear to have a small hard core of people here with a trace of common sense. I want to assemble them somewhere convenient and have a talk. It's going to be like pulling hot coals out of a fire with our bare hands now, but we'll have to try."

And so, less than thirty minutes later, in Dr Lem's house: the Shigarakus, Pedro Phillips, Hector Ducci, Harriet Pokorod, Marc, Alice and—more or less by accident—Erik Svitra. Garsonova glared at them.

"For your information, first of all, I'm the Chief Emergency Executive of the Standing Committee on Human-Alien Relations of the High Planetary Senate of Earth. Is that a resounding enough title for you, or do you want the rest of my official posts? I have eight altogether. I'm a qualified social psychologist, I'm a Degree Two Scholar in non-human linguistics, and I'm also a Scholar of Cybernetics and Data-processing. And right now I am very damned angry!"

They stared at her blankly.

She gave a sudden laugh, and leaned back in her chair. "Oh, not entirely with you, or your fellows in the enclave here. Mainly with the bureaucrats and politicians I'm responsible to. But I'm slightly angry with you, I have to admit. Didn't it cross any of your minds that letting Gregory Chart loose on a non-human planet was about the last thing Earth could possibly tolerate?"

"I think we all thought that Earth would be—would be unable to interfere," Dr Lem said after a pause. "In fact when we first asked our informat, that's what it replied."

"Hmm! Bad circuit-design there somewhere," Garsonova muttered. "Chart does his best to be a law unto himself; he's not, of course, but he tries

hard. Obviously you tapped into the wrong category. Look, let me start by making clear what your situation is—if you don't already know."

"I think I do," Marc said. "Though I didn't realise clearly until this very night. This impression that Earth couldn't take a hand must be deliberate. It's to generate self-reliance and force self-confidence."

"Neatly put," Garsonova approved. "So far we've never run across a non-human star-travelling species. But we've encountered seven quasi-humanoid intelligent races, and one of them—this one—is so remarkably like us, we can be sure beyond a doubt we shall very shortly be faced with a race that's an out-and-out rival. The likeliest human group to encounter them is a distant colony, more remote than any of the present ones. That little outpost has to be able to stand up for itself, to make the right decisions, to behave with the right courtesy, firmness, whatever, to deal on level terms, as it were. You here on Yan are a—a test-bench. A pilot project. Didn't you realise?"

"After such a long time," Dr Lem said, "the awareness of that must have drifted to the backs of our minds."

"Hmm! Yes! Moreover several mistakes have been made, not here, but in the original planning. Still, we have a chance to correct them now. More to the immediate point: have any of you bothered to question your informat concerning the nature of the Yanfolk recently?"

They all looked blank. "I don't think I quite follow," Hector Ducci said at length.

"Galaxies in collision!" Garsonova exclaimed, putting her hand to her forehead in a pantomime of horror. "Why do you think we equipped this enclave with that informat, enough to service a full-sized city? I found the key data just by going to my own informat at home on Earth and tapping for it! It's been sitting in store for over ten years: *shrimashey*, the dramaturge principle, everything! And did none of you bother to . . ?"

She let her hands fall to her sides. "No, that's absurd. Dr Lem, I must use your communet. Quickly!"

He made a vague gesture of invitation. She shot her hand into the air and whistled for a floating extension; the instant it reached her, she began to tap, then to talk.

"Category Yanfolk. Sub-category cultural manifestations. Sub-sub, *shrimashey* . . . I don't believe it. A blank screen."

"I've tried over and over, of course," Dr Lem said. The most one ever gets is a rehearsal of various recordings. Tapes that sometimes go clear back to the original landing."

Garsonova's dark face seemed to have turned grey. She tapped a different code and spoke in condensed technical jargon to someone they didn't recognise, one of the team at work in the informat dome. They waited, horribly aware that something might have gone irremediably wrong, and tortured by the knowledge that they had no least conception what it might be.

"Got it," the man from the screen said. It had taken about three minutes. "Blocks on circuits QA-527 through QC-129. We'll clear them, but it'll have to be by hand. Slow job. Local only, luckily."

"You followed that?" Garsonova said, pushing the 'net extension aside with a trembling hand.

"Blocks on the data circuits!" Ducci burst out. "But I personally maintain those circuits!"

"Maintain, yes. But question the data they're putting out? Never!" Garsonova thrust back a lock of smooth dark hair from her face. "No wonder you let yourselves get tangled up in this! And to think we never spotted it until Oh, never mind! I'll tell you! We *know* what *shrimashey* is, this fantastic population-control mechanism which looks like a drug-induced sadistic orgy. We know what the Mutine Flash is, and why it affects people the way it does—"

She checked, listening to the data-unit on her commentary. Paling, she stared at Marc.

"You experienced the Mutine Flash from inside the Mandala?"

"Ah—yes, I did."

"Just before you commenced your translation of the Mutine Epics?"

"Y-yes!" Marc's voice shook, and his fists were so tightly clenched his nails were biting into his palms.

"Has anyone else done the same?"

"Morag Feng. Chart's mistress. Who persuaded him to come to Yan and perform."

"But this is terrible!" Garsonova said. "I— Yes, Dr Lem? Have you suddenly caught on to what's been happening?"

"I'm dreadfully afraid I have," the old man said in a gravelly voice. "You're trying to tell us that the Mutine Flash took control of Morag Feng, ordered her to go and find Chart—or more exactly, to find someone who could carry out the project of re-creating the Mutine Age. And Marc here, similarly, was instructed to make his translation of the Epics so that Chart would find his—script ready and waiting."

"That's right," Garsonova said. "And what you've so cleverly been prevented from discovering, even though it was already informat data, is this. The Yanfolk, under the *sheyashrim* drug, are components of a superhuman organism whose collective brain consists in their lower spinal ganglia, the dramaturge—singular, not plural—which designed the wats and mandalas, and smashed the moon."

XVIII

FROM THE DAYS when he had first become interested in the concept of the human enclave on Yan, and had studied up the readily-available description of it which the local informats on any planet carried as standard, Marc recalled seeing that among the things it did not boast were competitive commerce, public transport, and representative government. Why bother, when there were only a few hundred people, capable of being linked over the communet or even, when a town's meeting was called at the customary quarter-year intervals, assembled in a single spot?

But this town's meeting, called by Chevsky before he was indicted and dismissed by his superiors from far-away Earth, was unique.

Virtually the entire population of the enclave had arrived well ahead of time in the informat dome. It doubled as a public assembly hall when Hector Ducci hit the right switch and created a horseshoe of seating from its yellow floor. By the time Marc entered, it was almost full.

He had remained in his old home, not wanting to return to the enclave. The air in Prell proper might be full of the never-ending stink of *sheyashrim*.

In the enclave, it was full of the odour of hatred. Chevsky had so successfully convinced everyone that having Chart perform here would make them rich and famous, there was now an almost universal dislike for himself, for Dr Lem, for everyone who was suspected of having thwarted the project.

Customarily the warden took the one seat facing the audience. Tonight, when everyone was settled, Garsonova took it instead. Marc had had the idea of punching her name into the communet's encyclopedia facility, and had been astonished to discover that she, like Chart, rated a full article during her own lifetime—and she was barely half Chart's age. Before entering government service, it appeared that she had been one of the human race's leading experts on non-human intelligence, having pioneered important communication breakthroughs with the Altaireans and the Denebolans.

"Why didn't they send someone like that to Yan?" he had said despairingly to Dr Lem.

"Because it's a big galaxy, and there aren't enough people like that to go around."

The sullen hostility in the yellow hall could almost be felt, like a chill fog. Most of it formed an aura around a group near the front, centered on the Dellian Smiths and others of Chevsky's former cronies. A corresponding group had formed on the opposite side of the hall, directly in front of the platform where Garsonova was sitting in place of the warden, including Dr Lem's associates. Alice had attached herself to the fringes of this latter group, having hung around at Marc's side ever since Rayvor abandoned her. He liked her no better than he ever had but he felt a pang or two of sympathy.

He missed Shyalee. He missed her terribly. For all her faults, he had found much happiness in her company. But the last time they had chanced across one another, she had not even smiled at him.

Not one of the intruders from Earth, Garsonova excepted, had put in an appearance. They had done what they had come to do—check out and repair the informat which someone had tampered with—and faded away. But Erik Svitra was still here, and present; he was entitled, as were all humans whether passing through or resident.

"Extraordinary town's meeting," Garsonova said abruptly, and silence fell. "Called by the former warden, Gillaume Chevsky, to vote a motion concerning the enclave's support for or rejection of a proposed performance here by Gregory Chart."

"Chart said himself he wasn't here to perform for us!" called Dellian Smith loudly. "What's the point of this pantomime tonight?"

"If the people here so wish, they can apply for free go-board programmes to get them away from Yan until the performance is over—or permanently," Garsonova said.

"Miss a performance by Chart? When people travel scores of parsecs to try and be around when he's working?" That, Marc realised with dismay, was Hector's wife, Mama Ducci, still unconvinced after long argument.

"You miss the point. This is not a commonplace event, and the purpose of this debate is to acquaint you with data you may not so far have. First off, from the chair, I will read you an in-

junction which has been issued against Gregory Chart, to interdict him from a plan expressed verbally to Marc Simon—"

"That traitor!" Dellian Smith shouted. "We all know he wants to keep Yannish culture to himself, to be the only person in the galaxy who's recognised as an authority on it!"

That was a new tack! Marc jolted around in his chair.

"Who cares about the wilders, anyway?" From Boris Dooley, not one of Chevsky's closer associates but apparently—according to what Marc had heard—so incensed by Chevsky's dismissal that he had come down squarely on the wrong side. "The Yanfolk don't!"

"Perfectly true. They don't."

The words were slipped in with the precision of a scalpel. The voice, unmistakably, was Gregory Chart's. Garsonova whipped arond in her seat. The sound had come from behind her, on the platform, and now, as though from an obscuring haze, two hitherto unseen human figures were taking shape: Chart himself, and Morag Feng, in unison dialling the anti-see units they wore at their belts.

"Forgive this subterfuge," Chart murmured. "But to have come here openly might have caused a distraction, and since we are legally entitled to attend we thought it best to exercise our rights."

"Rights?" Ducci was on his feet, shouting hoarsely. "You don't have any right to—"

"Yes, we do!" Morag snapped. "Any Earthsider transient or resident may come to one of these meetings!"

"And speak and vote," Chart glossed. "His vote, however, is progressively discounted once he has notified the informat of his intention to leave Yan again. I have no present intention of leaving Yan, and nor has Morag."

Garsonova said into a babble of noise, "You are quite correct. And your presence is fortunate. I now have the chance to serve you personally with the injunction which has already been imposed on the automatics of your ship for your attention. It prohibits you from taking away any of the Yanfolk known as 'wilders' from their customary living-zone, and specifically it forbids you to remove their brains or otherwise programme them for incorporation in—"

"I've already seen the injunction," Chart broke in. "I came here to say that while you may have caused me a lot of extra trouble by doing this, you haven't sabotaged the project as you hoped to. I'm going ahead. Not with your permission—I don't need it. But by direct invitation of the dominant species, the Yanfolk, in the person of their Speaker and the other *hrath*."

"Great! Great!" Dellian Smith shouted, and there was a ragged burst of applause. It was led by someone Marc didn't know. There were eight or ten strangers in the hall, who had come off the go-board as a result of the news-machine's tip-off. And they were only the first, he feared. More would follow.

Abruptly he jumped to his feet. "You told me you had no facilities for making Yannish androids! You said it would be too expensive and too time-consuming—"

"Oh, yes," Chart said. "It was you, no doubt, who put me to the extra trouble, or tried to. But the Yanfolk have solved the problem. They are pre-

senting volunteers."

"What?"

"Volunteers. Take my word for it, they're genuinely willing. Indeed, they're excited about the prospect. Chart's deep eyes fixed Marc like spears. "Here are some more new data for you to compute with. I was right about the Mutine Flash; it is the key to the eleven other books of the Epics. My computer, built on Tubalcain as you know, to the highest standards ever, has already worked out a tentative reading of its signal and every noon it's reinforced and clarified. As of now, for the first time in almost ten thousand years, the knowledge of the Yannish dramaturges is being recovered—and it's going to be applied. Convinced of this, numerous Yanfolk have offered themselves as vehicles for its expression, and among them you may be interested to know is a former friend of yours called Shyalee. So too is a male named Rayvor."

"You're going to pith them and—? Oh, no!" Alice was on her feet, poised to hurl herself bodily at Chart. Marc caught her arm.

"Save your breath," Chart said curtly. "There's no law against accepting a volunteer to take sheyashrim. Right there beside you is a drug-tester, who's made his living for years by finding new ways of turning off people's reasoning faculties in favour of their autonomic reflexes. True?"

"And whether they are volunteers in your sense, or not, isn't up to you to determine," Morag said with a hint of smugness. "That's in Yannish jurisdiction, not human."

"I'm afraid it is," Garsonova said after listening for a moment to the data-unit on her shoulder.

"So there we are!" Chart said with a grin. "On the threshold of a newly glorious Mutine Age. Don't be too hard on Marc Simon, by the way. He was instrumental in helping me to develop this project. And in case you're worried about one final point, I don't propose to cast a vote in this matter. For one thing I'm an interested party; for another your opinions won't make a smidgin of difference. Morag, shall we leave them to it?"

"Just a second!" A reedy, forced voice. Dr. Lem was rising. "Before you go, I have a further question, or two." He patted his seat-neighbour, Marc, reassuringly on the arm. The poet had doubled over, head in hands, as the impact of what Chart had said about Shyalee reached him.

"Yes?"

"You have yourself viewed your—your *decoded* version of the Mutine Flash?"

"Of course. How else could I be so confident of eventual success, me a human dealing in Yannish concepts?"

"Did you know that after she had experienced the Flash your companion Morag—during her period of apparent insanity—put blocks on certain data-banks in this very informat?"

Morag paled and put her hand to her mouth. Chart rounded on her.

"What's all this nonsense?"

"I—I don't know what he's talking about," Morag muttered. But she was apparently giddy all of a sudden; she swayed visibly.

"And did you know," Dr Lem pursued, to the accompaniment of vigorous nods from Garsonova, Ducci and several others, "that there are similar blocks on some of your data stores?"

"Rubbish!" Chart cried. "My computer is from Tubalcain, one of the

most advanced ever built!"

"I can prove it," Dr Lem said, letting his thin old hands fall to his sides. "Just now you spoke of the *dramaturges* of Yan, plural."

"So?" Chart rapped. "Come to the point! Of course there were dramaturges plural!"

"It appears not," Dr Lem countered dryly. "I must admit I found it hard to credit, too, when Officer Garsonova told me, but I'm now satisfied of the truth. You see, these blocks planted in the informat had a purpose: to conceal from anyone making chance inquiries right here in the enclave the fact that when the Yanfolk enter *shrimashey*, they cease to function as individuals, and become part of a self-repairing collective organism. The process is much analogous to that of a cut healing, or a bruise: a certain prescribed number of cells replace a roughly similar number of damaged predecessors. This ought to have been widely known a long time ago. certainly some decades ago, because the mindless operation of the informat discovered it at least ten years back, and human intelligence is better at spotting patterns than any machine we've yet designed, even your vaunted ship's computer from Tubalcain.

"It was the—the cortex of that organism which was destroyed when the moon was shattered here. It was its higher nervous system. All that survived was its reflex functions. As individuals the Yanfolk have long been aware of this, and they have been looking for a substitute focus through which they could once more achieve what was once achieved by the dramaturge. Singular. The race in absolute rapport, every single member of it reduced to a component part of a planet-wide union. They have found not you, but ***your ship***. And, thanks to Morag's interference while under the influence of the Mutine Flash, they have managed to hide the truth so completely that even you don't believe it."

"I " Chart's mouth worked. "No!" he blasted. "No! Lies! Lies! Morag, come with me!"

He seized her anti-see unit, twisted it, and in the same moment dialled his own. They vanished even as Marc leapt up on the platform to try and stop them, and when the confusion simmered down, they were gone.

"Was—was that all true?" Dellia Smith said at last.

"As far as we can tell, yes," Garsonova said. "It was why we called you together, to inform you of it."

"Then you've got to do something! We can't let him re-create this monster!"

Beside him his wife Rachel mopped sweat from her face. She wasn't the only one.

"What would you have us do?" Garsonova said stonily.

"Well—blast Chart's ship from the sky if you have to! But stop him!"

"A few moments ago you were all for letting him—ah—perform here," Garsonova said, and let the point sink home. "No, that is the one thing we can *not* do. We are forever going to meet things without precedent as we spread through the galaxy. We are trying to evolve a code of principles which will serve us regardless of what happens. We will not wipe out somebody simply because what he does is unpredictable."

"Well, then, I'm going to get off Yan!" Smith barked. "You had no busi-

ness turning us loose on a world like this, with—with . . . !"

"Right! Right!" A chorus. Everywhere in the hall people were scrambling out of their chairs.

A few minutes, and there were only Marc, Alice, Dr Lem, Ducci and Garsonova. And, hovering uncertainly by the exit, Erik Svitra.

"You're not leaving?" Garsonova said. "You'll get help if you want to—free go-board routes, a grant to re-settle you somewhere else."

"I can't," Dr Lem said. "Not after more than thirty years."

"And I can't," Marc muttered. "If the Mutine Age can't be prevented, I guess someone ought to be around to witness it."

"And you?" Garsonova looked at Erik.

"Me? I just waited to say I'm sorry I screwed things up. Just walked in and pow! Knocked things down!"

"Don't blame yourself," Marc said, staring at the floor. "That's the history of man."

Erik bit his lip, hesitated a second longer, and went out.

XIX

"I AM REMINDED," Dr Lem said, "of somebody I haven't thought of in years: my grandmother."

Marc thought for a moment. Suddenly he nodded. "I know exactly what you mean," he agreed.

They were inside the informat dome. It had been equipped—almost casually—with vidscreens more numerous and more flexible than those Dr Lem had seen in Chart's ship. Under its impervium protection they could reasonably expect to survive whatever happened as a result of the re-creation of the Mutine Age.

Also, orbiting Yan, there were scores of remote spy-eyes, and preparations had been made to record, analyse and study whatever unpredictable phenomena might now begin. There had been several already. Last night, following the departure of the last party across the go-board, the Yanfolk had destroyed the human enclave. They had walked out of their own part of Prell carrying torches, sledge-hammers and axes, and systematically reduced all trace of the alien buildings to smoking rubble.

Marc and Dr Lem had sat here and watched the process. The Yanfolk were obviously aware of the hovering remotes which relayed the scene to the informat dome, but they made no attempt to attack them. Clearly, they wanted what happened to be made known as widely as possible among mankind.

But there had been a strange savage joy in what they did.

"You mean Earth," Marc said eventually.

"Yes. It's a strange feeling for an old man to have, Marc!" Dr Lem shifted himself, since the go-board was inactivated by a signal from space. There were standby demolition charges ready, just in case the totality of the Yannish organism proved able to re-start its subtle power-fields, those space-straining contortions which literally enabled a traveller to walk a parsec with every pace.

"A good feeling for a young one," Marc said. And they both knew exactly what they were referring to: this sudden

reassuring sensation that even across the gulfs between the stars the mother planet was doing her best to support and protect her offspring.

"Did you ever realise that we were—what did Officer Garsonova call us?"

"A pilot project?" Dr Lem said. "I guess I must have, now and then. Something kept me here on Yan, even though I often felt I was wasting my time and my talents. Now I know I have an important use to put them to. The automatics will take care of a great deal of the raw information—but what better witnesses could there be for this unprecedented event than a psychologist and a poet?"

"What's Chart doing at the moment?" Marc said gruffly. He felt inadequate for the task which he had accidentally taken on.

"I don't think you can talk about Chart doing anything any longer," Dr Lem said. He flicked a screen to life, and they saw the Mutine Mandala shining in miniature, receiving from space the focused beams of the sun which was in fact drifting towards the western horizon. It had shone since before dawn; Chart's ship had launched a group of relay satellites which ensured that there would always be beams directed at the proper angle to excite the play of light and colour from the crystal pillars. Like a straggly pencilled line, a succession of Yanfolk were processing towards, and across, and out of, the mandala.

"Being programmed," Dr Lem said. "Those are what we mistook for the dramaturges: the ordinary Yanfolk, given a particular stimulus."

"Why did the dramaturge wait so long?" Marc muttered.

"I can guess," Dr Lem said with a sigh. "And the informat seems to agree with me, by the way. When its most ambitious plans are under way, ordinary nervous tissue won't cope, particularly if it's in competition, in an individual, with a higher nervous centre, a brain capable of thinking for itself. What happened to the Yanfolk was a colossal nervous breakdown, which resulted in the shattering of the moon. The reduced awareness of the collective organism was frightened. It's immortal, or effectively so—you realised that, of course?" With a glance at Marc.

"Yes."

"Therefore it was in no hurry to repeat the mistake it formerly made. It waited its chance to try again, hoping—oh!—hoping that the Ring would ultimately dissipate, and that Kralgak would become passable again, and that the wilders would be re-integrated into the species . But what's the use of hypothesising about something which is as far ahead of us as we are of the amoeba?"

"I don't agree," Marc said after a pause. "I think intelligence is a continuum, and that any rational creature able to transcend determinism—reflex—can in some sense communicate with and understand any other. There may be a gulf of the same kind as there is between a poet and a mathematician; one may have mental processes the other can't imitate, because they're not intrinsic to him. But one can understand the goals of the other, and to some extend the end products."

"Perhaps," Dr Lem conceded. "Just as you or I could share the excitement of a cosmogonist whose equations have balanced, indicating that his theories about the origins of the universe are

logical ones, without either being able to grasp the factors involved or apply the necessary operators to them."

"You take my point exactly," Marc said. "If we are to call any being intelligent, there must be at least one area we can share and communicate about. The rest—well, they may be as inaccessible as the core of a gas-giant."

"I wonder whether, one day, there might be a chain of such shared areas of experience, tenuous links that connect all the intelligent races in the galaxy, such that every thinking species has some data about each of the others, at tenth of fiftieth or thousandth hand."

"That may take a million years," Marc said.

"But it might be starting here and now," Dr Lem countered. "And—"

He broke off. The informat had flashed at them. "Chart's ship is taking off," it said. "Following an atmospheric course."

"If it is starting," Marc said, "I wonder if it will be anything we can understand."

"What's the good of guessing . . ? I wish I had Pompy with me, you know. What a foolish thing to say here and now!"

"Where is she?"

"I sent her off-planet with the Duccis; she's always been fond of Giuseppe, and I thought it unfair to force her into this even if I had stupidly decided to play the hero."

"Is that how you think of this?" Marc demanded.

"No. To be candid, no." Dr Lem wiped his face; it was glistening with sweat. "It's not bravery which kept me here, but obstinacy. Once upon a time I had this ambition, to unravel the mystery of Yan. And now it's turned out the mystery hasn't been a mystery for years, and the solution's only been kept from me by an ingenious trick played on this informat"—a gesture around the yellow hall they sat in. "And I feel annoyed! I feel cheated! I feel I want to do something to compensate."

He hesitated. "And," he concluded, "I have learned to love this planet."

"A field has been detected," said the informat. "The rain of meteorites on Kralgak has reduced by forty per cent—by forty-four percent—by forty-nine per cent—it is extrapolated that the meteorites will cease completely in one minute twenty-two seconds from the mark. Mark."

"After all your work with the Mutine Epics," Dr Lem said, "have you any clear idea what the dramaturge was trying to do?"

"Yes," Marc said. "Control the universe."

After which the sudden flood of startling images made conversation impossible.

Once more the form of a moon hung over Yan, but this time it darted back and forth like the racing hand of a weaver, or a potter, imposing design on crude shapeless materials. The night, over most of the planet's northern hemisphere, had been equable and mild, with a few clouds and only one summer storm, far around the world's shoulder over the ocean. Little by little the air grew charged, and lightning began to strike randomly. The aurorae swirled towards the equator, not in disciplined patterns as on the night of Chart's arrival, but in mere eddies, such as would attend the wake of a boat crossing choppy water at high speed.

And there were brief hiatuses in the

glow from the Mutine Mandala as the full blast of the local sun in empty space was concentrated for a fraction of a second on Chart's ship, to power it in the tasks which now it was being called upon to perform.

The Gladen Menhirs, marching in their serried line around the world, had suffered under the bombardment of meteorites. The ship paused here and there where gaps occurred in the line, or where one of the vast stone columns had been chipped. The land nearby shifted. Rock rose of its own accord, flowed as it rose, formed tidily into a match for the rest of the menhirs, heated until it was molten and then chilled to ambient in less than the twinkling of an eye. As the process continued, the vast stone blocks began to quiver.

"Minor seismic phenomena," reported the informat.

As yet, though, there was nothing that could penetrate the impervium shell of the dome in which they watched, anchored to the planetary crust.

"How's it done?" Marc breathed, and didn't expect an answer, either from Dr Lem or from the informat. Analysing a technique like this would have to wait until much, much later. This was not part of human science, this means to make rock ring like a handbell.

Next, that curious hollow mountaintop which Marc had visited with Chart and Morag, with the seating for thousands facing a blank wall. The ship stooped over it, carved with a stabbing laser-beam a pathway up the slope of the peak, and Yanfolk who had been patiently waiting at its foot began to approach it.

"That's a key part of the dramaturge," Dr Lem said with absolute certainty. "That's a—a cortex for it. Thousands of individuals cut off by walls of rock from the exterior universe."

It was obvous from their jerky gait that the Yanfolk were under the influence of the *sheyashrim* drug—but it was known that they had been brewing it in every city on Yan, not just in Prell, and the total quantity must amount to enough to dose every Yannish adult a hundred times over.

Next: the Mullom Wat . . . and the ship spun, insanely, a few metres above the water of the ocean, until it created a miniature cyclone and sucked up a huge column of whirling mist and spray. On top of the Wat itself a globe of water formed, remained intact against wind, against gravity. What the purpose of that was, they dared not even guess. But there was something in the globe of water. It gleamed now and then, apparently fixed although the water revolved.

And minor tasks: removal of a little pink thing, barely six metres high, from a post-glacial scree on the flank of Mount Fley; its installation on a nearby crest—assembly of uncountable fragments from beneath a landslide, into a shivering, howling framework of sour green light

There seemed to be no end to the details of this preparation. Marc felt himself yawning as the screens relayed all these scenes to him, and was faintly surprised that he was still capable of feeling tired. When one could not make head or tail of what was being shown, though

"And that's the power-source!" Dr Lem said suddenly.

"What?" Muzzily, Marc sat up and stared at the screens; to his amazement, he had indeed managed to doze off. He had a vague half-memory of the informat saying something, and tapped for a repetition.

"Major seismic events," he heard. "Crustal slippage on all continents."

What?

"Did you say power-source?" he said, turning to Dr Lem. The old man didn't remove his gaze from the screens. Now they showed vast storms, brilliant lightnings, mountains crumbling, the ocean boiling into colossal waves. Also, penetrating even the impervium dome, there was a grinding, screaming, rasping, mind-breaking drone.

"The informat is still analysing," Dr Lem said. "But I think that's what it must be. Informat?"

"Yes, Dr Lem?"

"Was it the intention of the dramaturge to convert the kinetic energy of the moon's rotation into propulsive power for the entire planet Yan?"

"Current data indicates this as a likely assumption," the machine said unemotionally. Marc caught his breath.

"In order to undertake a voyage throughout the galaxy?"

"The probability is high."

"You were right to say the dramaturge's ambition was on a universal scale," the old man said to Marc. And continued to address the informat.

"Is it now intended to make the planet's crust slip on its molten core, so that the resulting energy can be tapped and stored for the same purpose?"

"The probability is high," the machine repeated.

"But—!" Marc leapt from his chair. In his mind the picture was instantly vivid, more vivid than anything he had seen on the screens surrounding them. "But you can't do that, not without smashing the planet to bits! We'll be *killed*!"

"It's already happening," Dr Lem said glacially. "Look!" He pointed at the screen which showed what was happening along the coast of what had been the wilders' continent. The ocean was dissolving into steam and rocks were being tossed out of it like pumice from a volcano. Also there were real volcanoes on two—no, four—no, *five* of the other screens

And the floor shifted under them, as though the impervium dome were a beached boat just touched by the rising tide.

XX

"MARC! MARC!"

He was aware, but distantly, as though through a grey mist, that Dr Lem was staring at him, talking to him, half-turned around in his chair. Also there were the artificial, remote, miniaturised images: the volcanoes, the tidal waves, the storms .

No matter. That was on the wrong level of awareness. That was single-point perception. That was petty. That was obsolete. There was something infinitely better.

With the last trace of normal, human-style consciousness, Marc Simon the poet recalled a question he had put to the informat when the technicians from Earth had removed the blocks concerning the Yanfolk which had so efficiently and for so many years de-

ceived the inhabitants of the enclave. He had asked what kind of field, or force, united the separate members of the Yanfolk when they entered *shrimashey*, and how it could be detected. And the informat had stated that it could not be detected by any instrument thus far developed by human science; however, so many other fields, forces, space-continua, rings, sets, conditions and plena were already known that it must certainly lie within the limits set by *n* aleph* and the pi-to-the-e space of the go-board. Over six thousand seven hundred spaces were suspected which could occupy those parameters.

The likeliest detection instrument, the informat had declared, was a human nervous system.

Marc Simon was just discovering that it was right.

Skeleton . . .

Is a man aware that he has bones? Unless a gash opens the skin and muscle, shows the pinkish-white bone—say at the shin—there is only awareness of rigidity, articulation, and support.

Hot rock. Liquid but so compressed as to be rigid.

Skeleton.

Muscles . . . Supple, on the basis of bone. It took anatomists years, decades, centuries of patient cutting-up of corpses to discover how the muscles set in, what bones they anchored to, that there were muscles not subject to the will.

Metabolism . . .

They called it second wind, and it was in fact a subtle chemical reaction triggered by the inadequacy of breathing.

(All this very rapidly, and at the same time.)

Nervous system . . .

For millennia human beings did not know that they were thinking with their brains.

What was left of Marc Simon was laughing. It was the cruellest kind of laughter he had ever imagined: the dirty insulting laughter of a man who thinks it funny to stick out his foot and trip a cripple. But it wasn't Marc Simon who was laughing, as he had known Marc Simon. It was that which was left of Marc Simon when the dramaturge's neural currents took over his autonomic reflexes. There was intent behind that. There was the desire to make these upstart simians from Earth respect the being, the personality, of the Yan(folk).

What Dr Lem saw was his companion lying on the floor, roaring with hysterical mirth. But he, not having been taken out of himself, also saw the images on the screens, and felt the dome shifting as the solid land under it became first plastic, then molten, then fluid. The informat reported unemotionally that the exterior temperature was eight hundred thirty degrees.

He thought of the watchful devices from Earth, orbiting overhead, and was a little less afraid of dying than he had been a minute ago.

The planet strained, cried out, struggled, moaned. Its crust cracked, its mountains collapsed, its ocean churned and now literally began to boil. Meanwhile, the Yanfolk in the grip of their drug concentrated, con cen tra ted c o n c e n t r a t e d like a man retaining command of his reason after finding himself without warning under

water, seeing the glimmer of light at the surface, working out that he must swim to it while the cold in his nostrils presses and presses on the precious vanishing store of oxygen luck enclosed in his lungs.

And unable to stop himself wondering whether he will survive.

"You should not," Marc thought inside his head to the dramaturges, "have risked proving what you could do to me or any other human. You overreached yourself once. By insisting on this audience you have made certain of over-reaching yourself again."

There was a quiet content deep within him. It had nothing to do with him personally, the individual Marc Simon. It was racial. Collective. Like the rival, the dramaturge.

Meantime the planet strained and sweated and creaked.

"Do I understand because I came close to understanding Shyalee?"

That was a fraction of himself-as-was—barely enough to formulate the question.

But there was not enough of Shyalee in the dramaturge to know what he was talking/thinking about.

Awed, Dr Lem watched the spectacle on the screens. On the downlands of Hom the silver-tailed deer-like creatures fled from the heat which made the ghul-nut trees crackle into flame. The Plateau of Blaw cracked and trembled and cracked again, and the neat orchards, the tidy fields of Rhee scorched, convulsed, tossed their plants to the wind and let go of their rich ancient soil in the form of dust.

Meantime the image of the sun, on the day side, was perceptibly smaller.

Dr Lem nodded. Yes. What he had long loved was dying. And of its own free will.

He caught a glimpse, through a remote which had not previously been activated, of a tribe of wilders on a hillside, dancing exultantly as though their whole bodies had been caught up in a colossal shared orgasm. Two or three children stared at them dazedly, and one whimpered for food. But to the dramaturge that was irrélevant, as though a cell of skin had been damaged through the failure of a microscopic capillary.

The sun grew smaller yet in the sky, and darkness blotted out the blue.

He did not look at Marc, but was aware of him, lying on the yellow floor apparently unconscious.

So far, so good . . . except that there is simply not the energy for the dream to come true.

(That was recognisable as himself, colouring the—the concepts. Not words. Words were too small to communicate with this incredible mind.)

Like a man running with a gash in his femoral artery, losing so much blood at every step that no matter were he the galaxy's finest athlete he must fall before the finish.

The planet bled. Heat roared from cracks in the bed of the Ocean of Scand. Mountains crashed into valleys. The great desert of Kralgak began to slide away from the geographical relationship it had maintained for ten millennia, as though its friction against the northern and southern continents had abruptly become less than its friction against the molten core below.

If I had enough contact with my body, I would weep. It makes me afraid, it makes me terrified, to see this happen!

The planet was far from its orbit now, curling outward towards the bleak deeps of space. and the Earth-sent monitors and remotes paced it faithfully. The merest quiver of its dying agony must be noted, studied, interpreted

Marc wanted, unexpectedly, to scream. More than he wanted to weep. But that was a brief horror. It ended with the moment at which the Mutine Mandala ceased to shine. The roiling clouds of smoke and dust from the volcanoes had blotted out even the immensely magnified solar radiation which Chart's satellites had caught and concentrated for it.

It was like stepping from a hot to an icy planet on a single stride across the go-board. And there was a—a voice? Not quite. A personality. A presence. (All this was being remembered in the brain belonging to Marc Simon. It might never be fully understandable. It might be the raw material, one day, for a poem. It might be the making of a style which would enable tens of millions of people to say, "Ah, that's by Marc Simon!" But it was also as cruel as a hot branding-iron, and the message he could read as though it were flayed into his skin told him that it would scar him for ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever .)

They built that Mandala as you build computers. You understand?

Yes.

I am using a person you called Gregory Chart. I would have used the one you called Morag Feng. Only she was used before, and she is so tainted with the now-vanished message of the Mandala—

YES.

This is the story of the Mutine Epics. It is a story without an ending. Only a conclusion. There will be nothing left, in a very little while, except a cold bare ball of rock shrouded in chill mist, and certain strange relics which performed certain actions.

Yes.

(It seemed to be seeking reassurance from him, every few moments, asking that he at least would remember and recount.)

Once there was a planet whose people called it Yan. It was fertile, hospitable, even beautiful. A species evolved on it which was so far beyond your little isolated individuality that you can have no conception . . .

Go on. You lost me.

No. I was reconsidering. You do have a conception. It is what frightens me.

Frightens?

Yes. You are a poet, as Gregory Chart is/was an artist (but not will be because he is burning out). There is a mode of communication among you which is like that among my/our species, but which cannot take control of you. I am dying because while your dreams lure you my/our dreams had the power to drive

I think I understand that.

Yes, you do. And because you understand it is right that your isolated, lonely, separated scraps of protoplasm should do what I/we failed to do.

If it had been possible, the planet would have begged for mercy. Its crust was skidding on its core, the primeval magma was bursting out like arterial

blood, its last few surviving inhabitants were struggling to breathe. On its tormented surface a human-built impervium dome bobbed like a bubble on a rough river. The Smor had long ago been choked with debris and carrion. One after another the remotes were failing as landslides overwhelmed them, or crevasses opened and swallowed them up. Prell had gone to join its predecessors under water, but this water had been boiling, now was cooling or seething or

The dream broke you.

Because the dreaming part of me/us has never had to fight the harsh intractable reality of matter and energy. Do you see?

Yes. For you, who were the sum of the lower ganglia of a multi-million species, the universe was a concept, to be toyed with. Survival was dealt with by your separate members. So was hard work. So was reproduction. In other words . . .

Think it. I am past being insulted. I am reduced to a series of resonances in the badly-adapted circuits of a human computer, and one point of contact with your species: the failing brain of a once-great artist, whom I infected with my own vision . . . and burned out, as I burned out the victims of my earlier grandiose ambition.

You no longer say/think I/we.

There is no more "we." What oxygen in the air of the planet Yan has not been consumed in this colossal burning will shortly fall on its rocks as snow. We are half a lightyear from the sun it used to circle. Complete the thought you had in mind.

You're insane.

If sanity consists in doing what the universe permits, then—yes.

The last of the remotes failed. The informat said, "It is necessary now to convert to survival mode. Do not be alarmed. Adequate supplies and protective equipment are available to ensure your safety."

Dr Lem was shaking as though he had been an inch from death and not realised until the danger was past. His teeth chattered and his eyes were watering. He could barely make out Marc's body writhing on the floor. But none of the medical automatics had come to attend it.

It is something to have had a dream.

It is nothing to have become that dream. And not even a dream in myself. I am a fading echo in computer circuits, poorly adpated to resonate with my type of consciousness. Were it not for the minimal cerebral activity I can still detect in Gregory Chart, I would already have been—

Stop.

Marc sat up slowly, every limb aching as though he had been whipped and then crushed under very heavy weights. He heard Dr Lem say, "Marc—?"

And put his head in his hands, and wept, for Shyalee, for the dramaturges of Yan, for the Mutine Epics, for the dream that became the dreamer and when the time came to wake ceased to exist.

A voice said, "Malfunctions aboard the ship of Gregory Chart passed the permissible percentage. An automatic survival programme has been instituted. Requests for emergency assistance are being automatically broadcast."

"Marc?" Dr Lem said.

Marc looked at him and saw that he was whiter than paper. He said, "It was like what Chart did on Hyrax. There was a dream. It ended, and it had to be paid for. Only this time the dreamer was aware that it was dreaming. It was able to plan during the dream how to avoid payment."

"I don't understand," Dr Lem said, staring.

"Nor do I," Marc said. He felt his cheeks. They were wet. He looked at the little glistening drops he had transferred to his fingertips and found them very funny. He began to laugh. After a moment Dr Lem joined in, in a high old-man's neigh, with the hysteria of relief at having not after all been part of the dream which now was ended.

XXI

"You know Marc better than I do—or the automatics. Is he all right?"

Softly, from Trita Garsonova, that extraordinary woman who had so unexpectedly brought the support and comfort of grandmother Earth across the parsecs when everyone on Yan imagined it to be out of reach.

Dr Lem cast a worried glance in Marc's direction. He seemed to be sitting there quite calmly . . . but of course he had undergone terrible strains during the death of the planet Yan—torn apart by its own internal fires, then frozen in the wastes of interstellar space, as a result of the release of forces which humans admitted they could not control. And of those who had been most directly exposed to such forces, at least two were unlikely to recover. Both Gregory Chart and Morag Feng were completely insane.

"We're worried," Garsonova whispered. "He had such an emotional commitment to the Yanfolk."

"Like Chart?"

"Oh, on the contrary! Chart's commitment was only to himself; it was his ambition to be admired by us, by mankind, when he had transcended our natural limitations and conquered the mental territory of another race. When he found he couldn't . . . But Marc is different."

"Yes," Dr Lem said. "Marc is different."

And at about the same instant, Marc thought, "Ah, of course—I'm on *Earth*?

It seemed that he had a moment ago re-connected with his physical personality, after a period of non-time, after mere interval. He tried not to show alarm as he groped for memory. A go-board trip? Logically, yes. Since he was on Earth.

And not just on Earth. In a committee-hall of the High Planetary Senate. He was distantly aware of that fact, as though he had been told it by someone he didn't know well and didn't particularly trust. He stared in vague surprise at the high-roofed hall, at the people present—of all skin-colours, wearing an amazing range of garb, each seated at an informat-desk which tapped such stores of data that it was rather like combining them all into a collective . . .

Organism?

"Hello, Marc," a voice said without sound. Deep in his brain, on a level he was not consciously in control of.

But there was a familiar accent to the message. It reminded him of a slender, graceful body pressed to his own, uttered kinesthetic and tactile

signals and a scent like night-breeze drifting off the orchards of Rhee.

He felt himself, in Earthside clothing, his Earthly weight pressing him into a padded chair, one of a whole line of people facing these committee-members under an illuminated ceiling designed to duplicate Earthly sunlight. It was comforting to be so thoroughly reinforced by all the ancient racially-familiar symbols. So comforting, indeed, that he was able to answer.

"Hello."

"You know what I am. If you want me to be more precisely Shyalee, for example . . . ?"

But she was a few bones, charred, then frozen. He made a negative.

"She was never you. Even at the end, her consciousness drowned out with *sheyashrim*, she wasn't you."

"Define me, then."

"What little of the dream of Yan survived the extinction of the species that created you, and then the intolerable pressure of a starship computer which rejected you—and which now must endure the reflex prejudices of another race."

The . . . Could one use the term? Yes, it was inescapable! The dramaturge said, "Also Chart. He was arrogant, and tried to fight me. He had intended to use the Yanfolk as a stepping-stone to an ambition of his own. You are humble. You are the greater artist."

"Nonsense!" Marc snapped—silently. "Merely a younger man. Does age mean nothing to you at all?"

There was a pause. During it, Marc noted that someone who had helped co-ordinate data concerning the fate of Yán was delivering a prepared speech. He ignored the flow of words. He had something in his memory which transcended them.

"Yes," the presence inside his head indicated abruptly. "The proportions are different, though . . . You do understand what Chart originally overlooked, the most obvious explanation for the thousand-year quiescence of the Yanfolk?"

"I've talked about this with Dr Lem. He sensed it from the moment he arrived there. Exhaustion." And, hastily, he added, "What I and so many others mistook for fulfilment."

"In a way it was . . . but exhaustion is closer. Superorganism or not, I/we was/were worn out. It is not to be regretted that I/we died."

"?"

"Of course. What survives is only your awareness of what I/we were. I found something relevant in your mind; here!" And, as though a tape were being replayed: the memory of talking to Dr Lem, speculating about the chain of comprehension which might ultimately link all the intelligent species in the universe. It shone briefly in his mind like a necklace, every jewel of which was more brilliant than the Mutine Flash. He almost cried out for the shock.

At once melancholy darkened the vision, and he realised why. There were certain species doomed never to know whether the vision had a chance of coming true.

"I will now call on Marc Simon for his subjective analysis of . . ."

"I sense you appreciate why the planet had to die. But can you make them understand too?"

"That's not up to me. That's up to you."

He was already rising to his feet, staring out over the serious, intent faces

before him. All strangers. But all the personification of that comforting grandmother, Earth: isolated, perhaps stupid, certainly insensitive and beyond doubt inquisitive simians, worried by having lately heard about a creature, or a being, which regarded the displacement of heavenly bodies from their orbits as no more than a supreme effort of will, like a man lifting a heavy rock.

And it was up to him to make them see not only what was wrong with that approach to the universe, but also what had—after a fashion—been right about it . . .

He began to speak.

It was his voice that was heard in the hall, but it was not his mind that shaped the message. He listened, along with everyone else—though only he perceived the movements of tongue and lips, sensed the strangeness of having to draw breath (Shyalee who had not needed to interrupt her kisses) . . .

"The real problem was this," he heard himself say. "There was only one intelligence on Yan. And a single consciousness is simply not various enough to cope with the universe."

There were nods around the hall. The data-processing devices which mankind had adopted as prosthetics to underpin its own fallible reasoning power had presumably already pointed out something of the kind, just as the informat on Yan had known about *shrimashey* and would have told anyone and everyone about it had not the relevant data-circuits been cunningly blocked.

"By ten thousand years ago this intelligence, confined to its own resources, had exhausted the possibilities of its own planet and wanted to explore the local galaxy. It had treated Yan exactly as a human might treat his home: in other words, made it over to conform with a set of ideal preferences. It had devised the telescope, but the techniques which led us to the starship and the go-board were down an avenue of knowledge it had not discovered. To transport itself to the stars it could imagine no other vehicle than its home planet, and to launch the planet it could conceive no other means than conversion of the kinetic energy of its moon into propulsive force.

"To help the individuals of its species survive the projected voyage, it fined down their characterisitics, sacrificed their imagination and initiative in favour of a totally stable, perfectly self-regulating reflex process, ideal just so long as the goals of the race were so far ahead of those of the individual that the latter were negligible.

"Only the moon broke apart.

"The kinetic energy which should have catapulted the planet out of its solar system paid no greater dividend than earthquakes, tidal waves and the formation of the Ring.

"If there's a human experience which corresponds to the shock of that event, it can only be amnesia. The—the Yan, one has to say, considering it was a world-wide awareness—the Yan, then, became unconscious. Its components systematised what they recalled into obscure poems, but they could no longer even interpret the data compressed into the Mutine Flash, which was what might be called a set of notes, prepared in just the same way a human might write down references, or programme a computer, before tackling a particularly complex and demanding task, to inform him at every stage not

merely what had to be done next but what had been done up until now.

"Only the pattern in the Mutine Flash was as much a conscious process as the web of neural currents in the brain. It grew frustrated, and of its own accord began to search for ways to complete its assignment. It found me, when I ran the crazy risk of witnessing the Flash from inside the Mandala; similarly, it found Morag Feng, and through her Gregory Chart.

"By the time the Yan consciousness was functioning fully again, though, humans had been on the planet for a long while. And humans, and the human artifacts it investigated, such as the computer from Tubalcain built into Chart's ship, were calculating with concepts far beyond its grasp. It could never, for instance, have imagined the go-board—not because it was incapable of understanding the physical principle, but because it could not envisage the distribution of its parts among the planets of scores of different suns.

"Yet it could not bear to believe that these sons of monkeys were intrinsically its superiors. It wanted to make some colossal gesture to impress them. Unfortunately there was only one such gesture in its repertoire, and it failed. You might compare it to what Chart did on Hyrax. A dream was brought to life, but it had to end with an awakening in the real world. The real world rejected it. Natural law would not permit the hurling of the planet Yan through null-space to another sun. The planet broke!

"Why did not the Yan foresee this? Perhaps it did. If it did not, then the reason must lie here. The Yan was never a scientist. It was an artist. In the terms we invented to accommodate the symbology of the Mutine Epics, it was a dramaturge, whose highest ambition was to convert the universe into a work of art. But if it can be one, then it is one already, and all we can be is the audience for it.

"Regardless of whether the Yan knew all along that its plan was doomed, we can be sure that it realised the truth when the end drew near. And it did something which I'm terribly glad I shall never have to do. We're lucky, we humans. We don't bear, each of us, a total responsibility in our dying. We can accept the knowledge that we exist *sub specie aeternitatis*—against the perspective of all time and all space—because there are more of us to carry on.

"The Yan, though, had to decide, under the shadow of its terrible failures, whether or not it wanted to be remembered, and how to ensure that it would be. Think! That had to be settled once for all, in the counterpart of the twinkling of an eye."

A chill seemed to pass through the hall, as though Time himself had brushed them with his dusty ragged robe.

"And it chose yes . . . if only because its choosing to do so might serve as an example to us when our time comes. The saying goes that 'It's a big galaxy'—but it's one of an uncountable number, and one lifetime is a miniscule fraction of the span of the universe. Nonetheless, there's room in one lifetime to do amazing things!

"It could have chosen not to be remembered, you know. It wanted not to be remembered, not even to have been heard of. It was itself no more than was Gregory Chart, who on scores of planets has cobbled together the foundations

for true culture out of snippets and scraps, jokes and nursery rhymes and folklore! And to have found that one man among millions had already undertaken what it had needed millennia to accomplish . . .

"But that was its one lifetime, and it could not bear to have nothing to mark its passing. Even a failure, so it reasoned, on the scale of the universe, might be better than oblivion.

"So, for the first time, we have seen a species pass away. It grew old. It had done its best. It wanted to be remembered for its best. And even if in the end it leaves no trace but a few poems, those will carry on, in their fashion."

He sat down.

There was silence for a while. Eventually the delegates, without a signal, began to rise from their desks and disperse; so too did the witnesses on the platform. Marc remained in his chair, feeling curiously weary, as though he had stood for a long time under a vast burden without realising how big it was until he had relinquished it.

He found, eventually, that Dr Lem was looking at him, and started up, apologising for his rudeness. But the old man brushed the words aside.

"What I want to know is this," he said. "How can a person as young as you understand so clearly what it is to be old?"

"Because Yan was old."

"Yes, it was. . . . Once you understand what it is to be old, you can never recapture what it was like to be young. You realise that?"

"I think so."

"Do you resent it?"

"No, I feel there's a purpose to it. I feel there's a reason."

"Oh, come now! We at least aren't being whipped by some collective overlord towards a goal we can't imagine, as the Yanfolk were . ."

Dr Lem's voice trailed away under Marc's steady gaze. He said at last, "*Are* we?"

"If we are," Marc said, "I hope neither you nor I will ever have to know. Because the purpose might turn out to be futile, mightn't it?"

"Yes," Dr Lem said, his eyes focused on a fearful future. "Yes, of course it might."

"Time will tell," Marc said. "And when it does, I shall refuse to listen."

He took Dr Lem's arm and began to lead him out of the hall.

—John Brunner

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*MADEMOISELLE BUTTERFLY!

by DON WILCOX

THE invisible trap was closing in on me the night I finished my sell-out week at the Fraise Theatre.

The packed house applauded and shouted, "Bravo!" and "Long live Raymond Quinton!" I took eight curtain calls and by that time the grandiose governor of the island had mounted the stage to bestow official congratulations upon me.

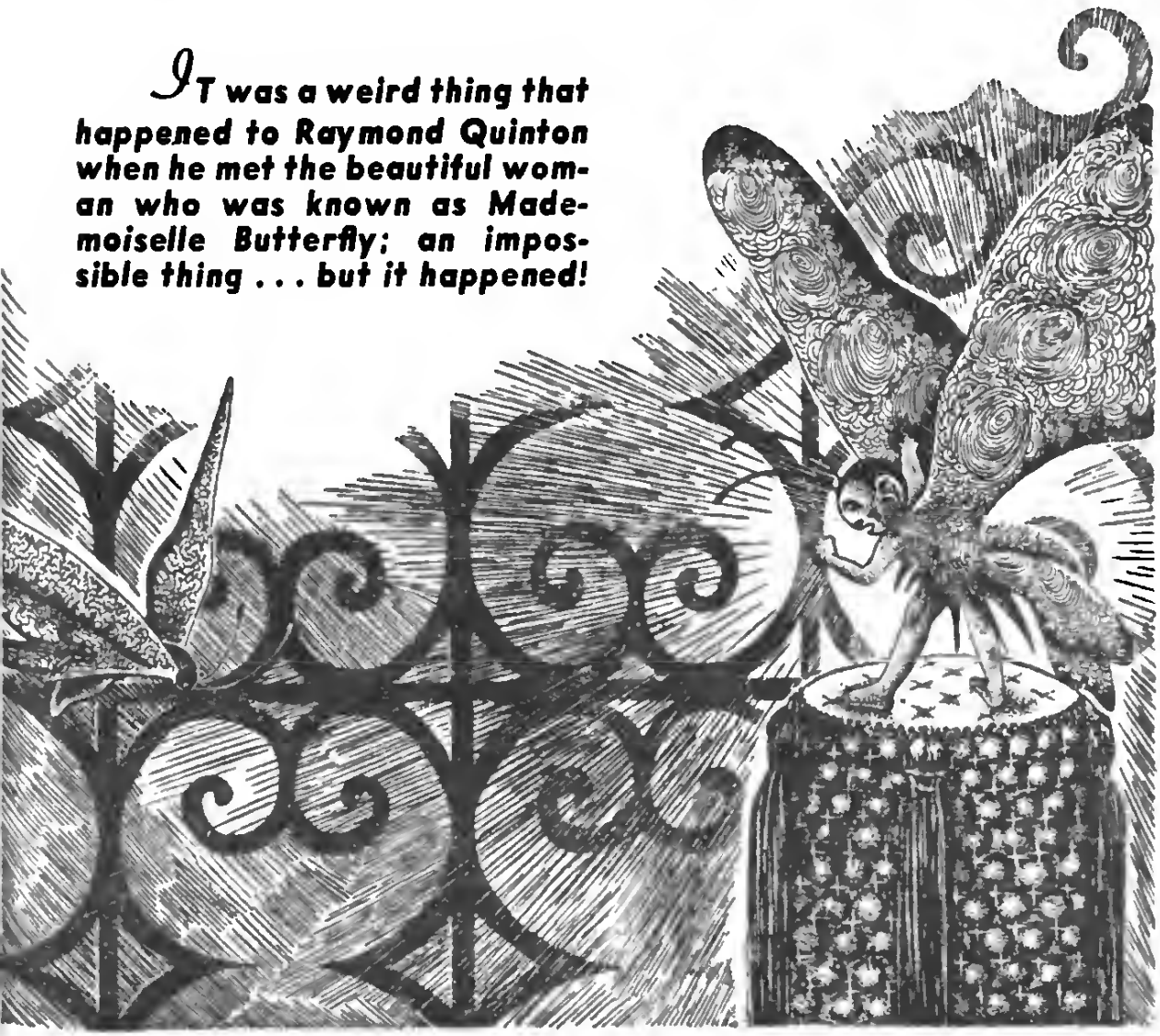
"Raymond Quinton," he shouted, placing a dynamic hand on my shoulder. "you are the greatest actor in all France—yes. in all the world."

His vast jaw snapped decisively and his beady little eyes gleamed. He might have been making a historic pronouncement. The audience backed him up with an immense cheer.

"Moreover you are the greatest lover the stage has ever known! Ladies of the audience, am I not right?"

The ladies shrieked with delight and

IT was a weird thing that happened to Raymond Quinton when he met the beautiful woman who was known as Mademoiselle Butterfly; an impossible thing . . . but it happened!



some of them jumped to their feet to lead cheers for me. It was a ridiculous demonstration, the more so because none of this profuse praise was for me. It was for a famous name—*Raymond Quinton.*

But not even my fellow actors guessed I was *not* the celebrated Quinton. (My name was Louis Ribot.)

The governor concluded the flattery-ritual by making me promise I would return next year. Then the curtain went down.

I did not leave the island of Fraise that night as I had expected. The governor insisted that I stay over for another day.

"All week you have been here," the governor argued, "and not once have you seen the rarest of the island's beauties. Tomorrow you must see her —the one and only Mademoiselle Butterfly."

So I stayed.

Gaston, my companion and fellow actor—the flashy little comedian of this summer's troupe—stayed with me.

At noon the following day Gaston and I were picked up by the governor's private limousine. We circled through the town and followed a short steep trail toward the upper extremity of the island.

"Splendid site," Gaston commented. "You'd think the governor would have placed his palace on that bit of hill."

"That bit of hill," the chauffeur volunteered, "was owned by an international society of scientists before his honor was made governor."

"Scientists?" Gaston blinked. "Do scientists live there?"

"One," said the chauffeur. "Mademoiselle Butterfly's father—a naturalist of some note, I have been told. He has developed the rare specimens of insect life which his beautiful daughter will doubtless show you."

"Insect life!—that reminds me," Gaston said. "Did you ever hear the English joke about the caterpillar and the hot biscuits?"

The chauffeur made no answer. I told Gaston I would save his caterpillar joke for Mademoiselle Butterfly.

"If she's as beautiful as they say," said Gaston, "the stage's greatest lover might want to stay over a whole week. You've never met her, have you?"

"I—I think not," I said.

"He *thinks* not!" Gaston clasped his head and groaned. "He meets so many beautiful girls all over the continent, he can't remember who's on his list."

I CHUCKLED for Gaston's benefit. But the circumstances were more complicated than I cared to reveal.

The fact was, I—Louis Ribot—had been employed as a double for the famous Raymond Quinton. Every summer he had me take over his minor engagements. But I was under oath

* This unusual manuscript was discovered in a rubbish heap on the tiny French island of Fraise after a recent bombing. It was written in exceedingly fine, delicate script between the printed lines of a book. This curious circumstance led the finder of the book to turn it over to scientists for investigation. Microscopic studies revealed that the writing had not been done by a pen. Nor were there any traces of hand marks crossing the pages parallel to the lines of writing. Instead, there were numerous prints of tiny feet one-half inch in length and three-sixteenths of an inch in width. These foottracks were perfect miniatures of human feet—a left and a right.

All of these evidences were at first assumed to be parts of an elaborate hoax, perpetrated by a trickster. But further investigation argued that known facts regarding several mysterious disappearances during the past decade dovetailed perfectly with the facts of this fantastic personal account, although the names of the unfortunate persons were disguised.

Finally, the book has been examined by three well-known naturalists, who agree that the fine ink-lines of the script could have been deposited by the tongue of a butterfly.

The book has been placed in the Municipal Museum of Lisbon where it is available for inspection.—Ed.

not to confide this secret.

Consequently Gaston was ignorant of my identity. He thought I was Quinton. He followed me around to bask in my fame. He became my good man Friday. At once we were fast friends.

Our limousine circled into the high graveled driveway. We alighted, ascended the wide white steps. It was a clean, commodious looking mansion from this approach, its white brick walls and wide ornamental French windows giving it the aspect of a hilltop palace. Gusts of sea air sifted through the fragrant shrubbery.

We waited a full minute before anyone answered the bell. Then a stately butler with athletic shoulders and a guileless face bowed through the open door and tendered his regrets.

"You have come to see Mademoiselle Butterfly," he said hollowly. "Governor Revel, however, has just telephoned to cancel your visit."

"Not so fast, my friend," I said. "You'll have to dish up a better excuse than that. The governor sent us—"

"I understand, sir, but—"

"His own limousine brought us up—"

"And it will take you back down," said the butler. "Governor Revel advises that you catch a boat for the continent at once to return ahead of the storm."

I turned to Gaston. "What do you make of this?"

"A cheap trick. There's no sign of a storm, not even a pain in my left ankle."

"Messieurs, a severe storm is on its way," said the butler bleakly. "The butterflies are very sensitive. They never fail to give warning."

"Butterflies, bah!" said Gaston. "My left ankle is the most sensitive—Ouch! —Oof!" Gaston sprung his weight on his left foot and scowled comically. "Messieurs," he mimicked the butler's stern demeanor, "a severe storm is on its way."

"Good day, messieurs," the butler snapped, but I refused to let him close the door till I knew what this was all about.

"For two cents," I said, "I'd punch somebody."

I must have said the wrong thing. Suddenly three more butlers appeared, and the four of them were a perfect set of quadruplets, even to their expressions. Their uniforms were alike except for the lettering on the shoulders. From left to right the shoulder insignias read, W, X Y and Z.

Gaston snapped at them like a cross puppy. "Where's the rest of the family? Bring out the old man. We'll battle all five of you."

"Never mind, Gaston," I said. "If this is Mademoiselle Butterfly's courtesy—"

"Mademoiselle is about to receive a guest," said the butler with the W. "A special guest from the governor."

"Let's go," Gaston whispered. "I never did trust that governor."

AS WE turned down the steps, a taxi rolled up the driveway. A tall gentleman with a steel-blue suit and a cocky blue hat with a silver feather got out and marched up the walk. A sword swung at his side.

Nearing us, he stopped. His black eyebrows lifted, the trim mustache widened with surprise.

"Monsieur Quinton!"

I bowed as if I knew him.

Playing the role of a double is treacherous business, as anyone can imagine. I was forever bumping into someone that I was *supposed* to know. This fellow glowered at me menacingly.

"So it's you, the puffed-up actor," he said. "No wonder the governor wanted to spare you the pleasure of

crossing my path."

"I beg your pardon?" I was sure this could no other tban Maurice De Brosse, noted fencing instructor at the University of Paris, considered the master swordsman of Europe. I bad often seen bis pictures.

"Those insults you flung at me from the stage of the Moliere," said the swordsman, "bave not been paid for. But revenge is sweet, my dear fellow."

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said, for Raymond Quinton had failed to inform me of this enemy.

"No?" He smirked sarcastically. "I suppose you took my written cballenge for a cashier's check and passed it at the bank. Or a pawn ticket to redeem your wig."

The fellow's insolent smile bore down on me. He drew his sword and patted it gently across the palm of his hand.

"He's crazy," Gaston hissed.

I glanced toward the entrance of the white brick mansion. Two of the lettered butlers had disappeared, the other two were eyeing me coldly. There was a stinging insult in their glare. Obviously the great Raymond Quinton, the stage's greatest lover, was less welcome bere than tbis ill-tempered swordsman. At heart I was neutral, knowing nothing of the original quarrel. But this was no time to let the great Quinton down.

"Fortunately," I said, "there is no law on this island to prohibit duelling. I may as well settle your grudge before I catch a boat for the continent."

Maurice De Brosse nodded. "Before you catch a cloud for the pearly gates, you mean," he said. "This unexpected good luck will assure me of the *other* victory I have scheduled for today." He turned to a butler. "Will you bring us a sword?"

"Z had gone for one, Monsieur De Brosse."

"You seem to be at bome here," Gaston observed. "What's your other victory?"

"Today," said De Brosse, "I've come to ask Mademoiselle Butterfly to marry me. After she sees how swiftly I dispose of men who fling insults, she will come into my arms."

A BUTLER came down the steps with a rusty relic of a sword. My bluff had gone farther than I intended. The other butlers huddled in the doorway to watch. Back of them a tall stony-faced man appeared, and with him—a beautiful girl.

The frightened look in the girl's eyes was all I saw for the next minute. I was vaguely aware that I weighed the sword in my hand, that Gaston warned me I was a fool to try my skill against this master; that the arrogant De Brosse was making boastful and mocking remarks for the amusement of the butlers—pointing out certain blossoms among the lawn flowers that he thought would go well with my chalk-white face.

What did Mademoiselle Butterfly make of all this, I wondered. I fancied I saw her fingers trembling. She whispered sometbing to her father, who frowned in my direction and shook his head, as much as to say that be didn't know who I was. Or perhaps that he was sorry for my chances.

The girl was looking at me too, and I thought she started forward as if she wanted to say something. Three or four butterflies, that I had first taken to be ornaments, fluttered up from her wealth of honey-colored hair.

"Don't go into this!" Gaston whispered in my ear. "You haven't a chance."

I came back to myself with a jerk. De Brosse, smiling treacherously, was advancing, his sword ready.

Suddenly the air was aglitter with flying blades. I maneuvered backward. He drove me down the walk. He crowded me against the taxi, whose driver shouted at us not to scar his fenders. On back I went, hoping to catch a momentary advantage when I came to the governor's limousine—only it wasn't there.

We circled around the drive. Gaston followed us as close as he dared, gasping advice.

"Let me take over, Quinton! I'm your man. I'll—"

"Shut up," I said. "This is my fight."

"You're inviting murder," Gaston yelled, "by a professional—"

"What's that?" De Brosse changed his stance to embrace both of us. "So *you* want to get in on this?"

"I'm in on it," said Gaston, and he jerked a pistol out of his pocket. My arms went icy. That was nothing more than a stage pistol, probably empty. But it was a pistol.

De Brosse drew back and stared giddily. "Hold on, here, this is a fair duel—"

"It's going to be, from now on," said Gaston. "You and me. When I get through with you, Quinton can have what's left." He barked an order to the nearest butler. "We're duelling with pistols. See that this man is supplied."

STURDY fellow, Gaston—a hundred and twenty-five pounds of courage and loyalty! De Brosse couldn't talk him out of it. He brandished the gun and said it would either be a pistol duel or a pistol murder.

And so, a minute later, Gaston and De Brosse carried on, and I was out of it.

Back to back, they marched apart twenty paces. At the signal, they whirled to fire.

In that critical moment a butterfly lighted on De Brosse's nose. The swordsman's shot went wild.

"Now I've got you," said Gaston, taking deliberate aim.

"Hold your fire, damn it. I was fouled—"

"I'll plug you right through the heart!"

"I was fouled, I tell you. That damned butterfly—" The swordsman wailed, batting at his face.

"I'll knock it off," said Gaston. He steadied his pistol with the utmost care.

Again the butterfly settled on De Brosse's nose, crept up to his forehead. He struck at it, knocked it down. Then the girl's voice cried out.

"Don't kill it. Don't!"

Out of the door she came running to throw serself at De Brosse. Her voice was nothing less than hysterical.

"How could you do such a thing, Maurice? You struck it down you—you brute!"

"And which is more important," the swordsman asked coldly, "my life or the life of a measly butterfly?"

"Oh, Maurice!" The girl broke into angry tears. "After all I've told you!"

The father hurried down to her as she bent to pick up the brilliant little winged creature. "It's dead? I'm sorry," he said consolingly. Then turning to De Brosse, he said coldly, "I'm surprised, Maurice. You've been here many times. You know how Madeline and I feel. Every living thing has its place. We're all a part of nature —you — these strangers — this butterfly—these flowers—"

De Brosse was in no mood to be tender toward butterflies and flowers. He noted, however, that his adversary had chivalrously put the gun away.

The swordsman struggled out of his fright and began some strong apology-

talk in the direction of the girl and her father.

"Sorry, Madeline. I didn't intend this mess until these scoundrels accosted me—"

He should have saved his lie until I was gane. I couldn't take it. I marched into him with my fists and landed a solid one on his jaw that made his sword clank in its scabbard. But Gaston yelped, "Desist!" and the four butlers pounced on me and dragged me down the walk to the limousine. It had just come back, and the governor himself was in it.

"Sorry, Gentlemen," the governor said. "A slight error in arrangements. Under the conditions your visit will have to be postponed."

"Permanently," I said, as we drove away. "If she prefers the company of that savage knife flinger, I don't care to meet her."

"She won't be seeing much more of De Brosse, I've a hunch." Governor Revel's smug jaw-heavy face wore the very expression that an amateur stage villain employs to inspire distrust. "I hope you'll change your mind and meet her. And I think you will."

On the sly Gaston whispered to me, "I *know* you will. The great lover of the stage can't be scared off."

MY own over-zealous curiosity—or perhaps it was my romantic weakness—conspired to make Gaston's prediction come true.

Then, too, the weather had a hand in it.

The predicted storm struck the island, so we learned, a few hours after we returned to the continent. It played havoc with the village. It shattered many of the beautiful windows in the white-brick mansion. The papers carried the pictures.

I read the news reports to the last detail. A rash plan burst upon me. I snatched at it. A few days of preparations, with Gaston's help, and then. . . .

There were no brass bands blaring a welcome to stage stars when Gaston and I returned to the island of Fraise two weeks later. We were *incognito*.

We stepped from the boat landing into a taxi, expecting to be taken directly to the home of Mademoiselle Butterfly. My plan was off to a perfect start.

There were three of us: an architect, Jean Pash, famous for his restorations of cathedral windows following the World War; his two assistants—Gaston and myself.

Monsieur Pash was due for a rude shock when he should discover how little we knew about glass mosaics. We had hired out to him as apprentices only after framing an accident and saving him from it, thereby establishing ourselves in his favor.

Monsieur Pash's order to the taxi driver caught us napping.

"Take us first to the governor," the architect said.

The governor was the last person we wanted to see. Not that we didn't consider ourselves well disguised. As actors we had taken on the make-up, clothes, dialects and manners suitable to architects' apprentices. But if the governor should see through us—

I literally held my breath as we taxied into the palace grounds. What was up the architect's sleeve?

Governor Revel strolled up to the runningboard, bestowed passing glances upon Gaston and me and gave his full attention to our boss. I breathed again.

"Whatever the cost of fixing the blown-out windows," said the governor, after he had checked over the architect's credentials, "the island government will stand good for it. I want the scientist to be pleased."

"Thank you," said the architect. "Monsieur Dujardin shall have new windows as fine as any Gothic cathedral. But tell me, is it safe for my assistants and me to stay at Monsieur Dujardin's house?"

"Safe?" Of course," the governor snorted. "The hotel has been closed for repairs, as I wrote you, but the white brick mansion has ample accommodations. There are four butlers—"

"I have heard," said the architect, eyeing the governor stonily, "that one swordsman by the name of De Brosse recently disappeared."

THIS was true. The papers had headlined this "MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE!"

"Oh, that!" the governor appeared to be greatly amused. "*You* have nothing to worry about."

"I have *me* to worry about," said the architect. "I have my two assistants. If it is true that Monsieur De Brosse disappeared, and that you did not even send officers to investigate—"

The governor tossed his head back, scowling defiantly. "I have no jurisdiction over that end of the island," he snapped. "The scientist has that kingdom to himself. But I will tell you what happened."

I nudged Gaston, who sat expressionless beside be. I knew he was taking every word down in his lightning swift mind.

"The swordsman, like a few other men who have—er—removed themselves from circulation," said the governor, jutting his wide jaw contemptuously, "were suitors of Monsieur Dujardin's daughter. Each in turn, the scientist has confided to me, asked to marry her."

"Don't tell us they resorted to suicide!" said the architect.

"Wait till I finish," said the governor. "You see, Mademoiselle Butterfly is so imbued with her father's notions about man's place in Nature that she subjects each lover to a test of worthiness. *The Test of Dust,* they call it. It must be a severe test. De Brosse, like his predecessors, failed. Naturally he was stung. Have you ever been badly stung, Monsieur Pash?"

"I—er—ahem—" The architect narrowed his eyes defensively.

"The natural thing," said the governor, "is to slip away into hiding. That's what Maurice De Brosse has done. Instead of ferrying back to the continent, he slipped back by a *steel cable.* You'll see it from the rear of the scientist's house—the first cable of a bridge that was to have been built across the narrows."

"Curious," said the architect.

"Mademoiselle Butterfly's defeated lovers find it the quickest way out," said the governor, mopping perspiration from his forehead. "The other side of those narrows is Portugal. It's a short distance to rail, ship, and air ports. You see how easy it was for De Brosse to give his world the slip? Now—have I done away with your chills, Monsieur?"

THE architect nodded, satisfied. Governor Revel waved us away. But glancing back I saw the chauffeur, the one who had driven Gaston and me on our previous visit, standing near the driveway staring after us. We turned out of sight, but I didn't feel too comfortable over the deal.

A few minutes later the tall mild-mannered Dujardin was conducting us through his laboratories. There was a strange depth about this scientist, both appealing and mystifying.

"Very interesting, very interesting," Monsieur Pash kept saying, "but your brand of magic and mine don't mix.

I'd better start surveying the windows for repairs."

"There'll be several days of work," the scientist smiled, "so you needn't be in any hurry."

But Monsieur Pash was impatient to break out some of the dangerous hanging glass that had been poorly boarded up. So our tour was sidetracked in the direction of the damaged windows.

"These on the south were particularly beautiful," said Dujardin, "but I'm not sad that they are gone. I want to replace them with some rare types of glass to aid my experiments."

We left the architect to his preliminary surveys. But Monsieur Dujardin was eager to show more of his laboratories, and Gaston and I were willing to see.

We passed through one narrow laboratory room after another. To catch the sunlight to best advantage, these rooms had been tacked onto the house in a zig-zagging chain, enclosing a small open court.

The scientist led us out into this court, mentioning that we might be interested in seeing some synthetic butterflies.

"*Synthetic!*" I gasped. But a nudge from Gaston reminded me to hold my tongue. Too much curiosity wouldn't become a common workman.

"What a place! What a place!" Gaston mumbled as we followed the scientist down the sunshiny path. It was the most richly colored flower garden I ever saw—almost luminous. Perhaps the colors were enhanced by the contrast of powdery blue mountain tops which rose above the zig-zagging rooftops—a bit of the Portugal shore peeking over Everything within the enclosed court was beautiful, fragrant, and serene.

No, there were a few harsh sounds that intruded—the intermittent hammering and wrenching along a section of broken windows facing the court. The architect had already started work clearing away some of the dangerous hanging glass.

But the sounds which blended with the beauty of the place were the soft hum of bees and—the low intense voice of Mademoiselle Butterfly herself.

"Father!" she called. "Come see the new butterfly! He's unfolding his wings. He's marvelous!"

"Really! Come, gentlemen. This will be worth seeing."

Mademoiselle Butterfly was kneeling at the foot of a white trellis of rambling roses. At her feet was an outcropping of rock, pink colored and porous, that reminded me of an enlarged chunk of pink taffy candy. On a ridge of this brittle rock sat the newly emerged butterfly.

"Wait till he opens his wings again," said the girl, pausing in her fascination long enough to glance at Gaston and me.

PERSONALLY I thought the butterfly far less interesting than the girl, and while she chattered about this latest synthetic insect I mused upon the loveliness of honey-colored hair and a child-like face as ornaments for such a flower garden.

The butterfly was a flimsy colorless leaf-like creature—until it opened its wings. Then its true colors came into the sunlight—a deep blue edged with silver spots.

"Can it fly?" said Gaston.

"It hasn't yet," said the girl. "But as soon as its wings stiffen it will try."

"You see," the scientist added, "those little veins through its wings are just now finishing the job of tightening him up. The sticky fluid is passing out of his body through the wing veins."

"A glue job, huh?" said Gaston.

"That's the general idea," said Dujardin. "It won't take long—"

"Look! He's going to fly," Mademoiselle Butterfly exclaimed.

The shiny little fellow fluttered into the air, and the girl chased after him. Then to my amazement she began to *call* to him—as if the creature had the power to understand!

"Wait! Don't run away from us. We've got to be friends, you know."

By some strange coincidence the butterfly did turn back when she called. But it seemed intent on giving its wings a fair try and it suddenly darted off on a tangent past the trellis, past me—

"Come back!" Mademoiselle Butterfly cried. "Don't go toward *that* window!"

IT all happened too swiftly for words —the battering of the architect's hammer—the shuddering of a huge window frame—and then, right above the butterfly, the loosening of a five-foot section of broken glass.

I sprang toward the butterfly. It settled on a plant directly below the falling glass. I hurled myself over it, flinging my loosened coat up over my head. Then—crash!

The glass splattered down over me. A few sharp gashes prickled my body. But I had done it!

Yes, I had caught myself on hands and knees just in time to save the butterfly from death. As I raised up from the heap of debris, assisted by Gaston and the scientist, the little blue and silver wings fluttered out from under me.

"Oh—thank you, *thank* you, Monsieur," the girl breathed. "You saved his life. I can't tell you how—"

She groped for words, and the warmth of her smile was balm to every bleeding little gash over my body.

"I can't tell you how much this little fellow means to me." She held out her hand toward the butterfly. It climbed up to the crook of her arm, seemed to be looking into her face. She spoke to it softly.

"You're my friend right from the start, aren't you, little fellow? Do you know what your name is? It's *Maurice.*"

"Maurice!" I gasped. Again Gaston nudged me. This was one of the choice times for me to keep quiet.

THE Four Heffles as the quadruplet of butlers was called, made the architect and his two incognito assistants as comfortable as guests.

Gaston and I managed to hold up our end of the work, and the repair job moved along to the architect's satisfaction.

Within a week my acquaintance with Mademoiselle developed into a deep friendship. My being a workman seemed to make no difference to her; at any rate she welcomed my companionship after work hours. I had evidently made a deep impression by saving that butterfly.

But above all I puzzled over the profuse affection which she gave to her little insect pets. There were nine of these "synthetic" butterflies—"Maurice" being the ninth.

One evening as Madeline and I were taking a leisurely swim in the narrows I accosted her about the butterfly's name.

"Why Maurice?"

"After a friend of mine," she said.

"A romance?"

"Disappointments and memories are always romantic," she said.

"Are all of your butterflies named after—er—memories?" I asked.

"You're very unkind," she said. "Is it polite to ask a girl, 'How many men have come to woo you and then run

away?' That's what you're asking me."

"I'm sorry," I said. "All that really matters to me is that you didn't fall in love with any of them."

"Perhaps I did, though."

"If that were true, they'd never have run away—not unless they were fools."

We were swimming along on our backs, and Madeline pointed up to the steel cable, a black line across the evening sky.

"That was the beginning of a bridge across to the Portugal shore," she said. "Can you imagine a person riding across by pulley?"

"I heard the governor mention something of the kind," I said.

She turned to me, her eyes full of questioning. "Then you've heard about the—the *Test of Dust?"*

I nodded. For a few minutes we swam in silence. Mademoiselle Butterfly was lost in a reverie of far-away thoughts.

"Living here is like living in a different world," she said. "Unless you know the mysteries of Nature that Father and I know, it might be hard to understand—"

"I'd like to try," I said, and I drew her into my arms and kissed her. She looked up into my eyes, half-frightened, then started to swim away. I overtook her, caught her hand, tried to draw her face close to mine. But she shook her head.

"The butterflies," she said.

I LOOKED up to see three or four of her winged pets fluttering past us. "What about them?"

"I — somehow I'd rather they wouldn't *see* me kissing you," she said.

I laughed rather too boisterously. "You're the most curious person I ever met," I said. "Do you think those insects have a sense of modesty?"

"It's silly, isn't it?" she laughed childishly. "I don't know how to explain it, but somehow they're so much like human friends to me—"

"Symbols of your memories," I said rather harshly.

Her eyelids flashed at me and for an instant I thought I had hurt her. But she said, "They had no right to intrude," and as she watched them fly back toward the white-brick mansion I took her in my arms again

That night after dinner Gaston said he wanted to have a talk with me. We sauntered down to the cliff's edge. Abruptly he said, "I think you and I had better clear out."

"Not on your life," I said. "I'm just getting acquainted—"

"You're behaving like a romantic fool," he said. "That's all well enough on the stage, but you're carrying your game too far. The girl's in love with you."

"Say it again," I said. "That's sweet music."

"I've picked up some of her father's view, incidentally," Gaston continued. "He's not too enthusiastic about the various swordsmen, noblemen, and other assorted aristocrats that have come here to woo her. Temperamentally she's more likely to fall in love with a workman like you—"

"So I'm deceiving her, I suppose?"

"You certainly are," said Gaston.

"Yes—yes." I threw a handful of stones into the black sea just to work off nervous energy. Deceit had become my game. I hated to think how Gaston might take it if he knew I was deceiving him too.

I was not a workman, as Madeline thought. I was not the great Raymond Quinton, as Gaston thought. I was simply Louis Ribot, the great Quinton's substitute. But above all else I was a man in love.

"I'm mad about her, Gaston," I said.

"Even if I don't know the first thing about this mysterious Nature World of hers—"

"It's dangerous," Gaston snapped. "We'd better get away. There's a screw loose on this disappearance business. Have you see that cable across the narrows? How could a man cross that?"

"With a pulley," I said. "It slopes down——"

"How does the pulley get back?"

"I don't know."

"The way this thing figures out," said Gaston savagely, "Nine men have come. fallen in love, tried some sort of test, and failed. Each one of them has been so badly stung, according to the governor, that he has chased off into oblivion the quickest way — by the cable. Tell me, how did they do it? Did the wind blow that pulley back nine times?"

"I don't know."

"Are you going to be the tenth escapee?"

"No.

"What makes you so sure? What makes you think you, the great lover of the stage, won't meet this same defeat? In a few weeks the country will give you up for lost, like Maurice De Brosse. Your admirers will buy some wreaths for you, the papers will publish your obituary—and the Mademoiselle will name a butterfly after you. Is that what you want?"

"No."

"Then what do you want?"

"Mademoiselle Butterfly," I said.

AT THAT Gaston took time out to uncork a line of profanity—the best gems from many a box-office success. It was disillusioning, he moaned, to discover the great Quinton was such a dolt.

"Let's start over," he said, pleading with me like a broken-hearted father. "You came here to restore your ego. You wanted to prove that that cheap swordsman, Maurice De Brosse, couldn't nose out the stage's great lover. All right. She's fallen for you—"

"Do you think so?"

"Rot! What are you doing, rehearsing? I told you—oh, what's the use." He tore his hair and started off. But he whirled back on me. "Answer me three questions. Do you trust the governor?"

"No."

"Now we're getting somewhere. Do you trust the scientist?"

"I don't know What's your third?"

"Just where do you think Maurice is?"

"Maurice the swordsman or Maurice the butterfly?"

"The swordsman, of course."

"Morocco, probably, or Cape Town."

"More rot! Do you know what I think? I think he was *murdered*—he and eight others. Oh, you can laugh. But I'm warning you—"

Gaston broke off. We could hear footsteps approaching along the cliff path. Out of the near-blackness came Mademoiselle Butterfly, her father, and Governor Revel.

"Here they are, father," said the girl. She was wearing her artist's smock. I knew she had expected to help her father tonight with his sculpturing of insect models. So the governor's visit had come unexpectedly.

"I'm showing Governor Revel through the laboratories, messieurs," Dujardin announced, "and my daughter thought you two might care to join us. No?"

"No," said Gaston sharply.

But I assured them that he was only jesting. Of course we would come, with pleasure.

EMERGING from the darkness into the brightly lighted reception room of the mansion, Gaston and I were careful to follow along at the rear of the party to escape the governor's notice. Though he had failed to recognize us on our incognito arrival, a few days previous, our disguises were too meager to bear close scrutiny.

"This way, messieurs," said Monsieur Dujardin, leading us in the first of the laboratory chambers. There was a slight nervousness in the scientist's manner, though at the time I thought nothing of it.

Monsieur Pash joined us, and the six of us proceeded through the maze of rooms, the architect and the governor following close after the scientist; Gaston and I accompanying Madeline.

So this was Mademoiselle Butterfly's world! I tingled to the fingertips with interest. Mystery upon mystery unfolded before us. All of us asked questions—even Gaston. He must have forgotten his silly suspicions about murders.

In one room Gaston picked up what appeared to be a high-powered flash lantern. He was surprised to discover that it was already on. He turned it to cast a dim amber beam across his face.

Dujardin warned him gently. "I wouldn't take too much of that beam if I were you—unless you want to *grow.*"

"Shorty could use a little more size," Monsieur Pash laughed.

"That beam is working on those tadpoles, to hasten their development," said Dujardin. He replaced the amber flash-lantern. Its sickly glow bathed the dark and slimy inmates of the little glass aquarium. "There's much waiting to be done in the way of ray experimentation. The powers of this particular lantern, which I've just completed after two years of crude trial and error, are still largely an unknown quantity—"

"Unknown to your fellow scientists?" the governor asked, "or—"

"Unknown even to me. You've heard something of my theories before, governor," said Dujardin, "and you know that my basic hypothesis, which caused my fellow scientists to establish me in this fine sunlighted laboratory, is the hypothesis that men and guinea pigs and earthworms and hyenas are all cousins."

"Hyenas—that's good," said the governor, laughing pompously. "I've known plenty of human hyenas in my lifetime."

"Underlying my theory," the scientist continued, "is the indisputable fact that all life, plant or animal, thrives upon water, earth, air, and sunlight. A man forgets that he is actually a water-dwelling animal, encased in a crust of skin. But when our friend here—" he pointed to me, "suffered some minor glass cuts the other day, I demonstrated to him that he is a cousin, far-removed, to the minutiae that swarm the seas."

I HALF-RESENTED the comparison until I noticed how enthralled Madeline was. She smiled at me as if I were one of nature's wonders, and I must have swelled with pride. Gaston made a sour face.

By far the most extravagant idea—and the scientist admitted it was highly hypothetical—was his contention that every specialized form of life, such as a human being, or a frog, or a hyena, contained the capacity to *retreat through its stages of development, back to the point of separation from other forms of life* . and having retreated, it might be made to *re-develop* along new lines.

Again the governor broke in with his bumptious humor. He knew some

brutes of politicians that proved the point. They had *backslid*, he snorted, and then gone and *turned hyena*.

"And I've known some jackasses, too!" Governor Revel laughed uproariously and slapped the scientist on the back. "A great idea, Dujardin. Human hyenas, jackasses, and what about a chameleon or two? You know—the little lizards that change color so they won't be seen against their background?"

"What about them?" said Dujardin embarrassedly.

"Maybe we've got a couple of them among us, eh? Turn on some brighter lights, Dujardin, and let's have a look."

"Oh-oh," Gaston whispered. "Our game's up."

Dujardin must have known this was coming. His nervousness had betrayed it. Madeline, however, wore an expression of puzzlement. The architect was a perfect blank. But, obviously enough, Governor Revel had come here to expose us.

"Well. well, well!" the governor exclaimed, gazing at Gaston and me under the full light. "My old friends, the actors! Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Gaston, the celebrated comedian, and Raymond Quinton, the most famous lover of the French stage!"

Gaston and I did the only thing we could do under the circumstances. We locked arms and took a deep bow.

"Guilty!" said Gaston. And I added, "At your service."

"I told you so." Governor Revel gave the scientist a wink. "My chauffeur caught their identity the day they arrived, but I needed time to be convinced." He turned his victorious smile on Gaston and me. "Well, my friends, you are again most welcome to the island of Fraise. And what, pray tell, brings you here incognito?"

"Quinton is learning a new trade," Gaston cracked.

"Love has been called by funny names before," the governor laughed, placing his hand on my shoulder. "A very clever hoax, Monsieur Quinton. Does the stage's great lover have to have an assistant when he woos a fair lady? Perhaps Monsieur Gaston writes the lines for you to recite, yes?"

MY SHOULDER twitched out of his hand. I saw that Madeline was annoyed—whether at me for my hoax, or the governor for uncovering it, I could not tell. Red was clouding my eyes. I exploded with a quick blast of anger.

"When or whom I woo is nobody's business, least of all Governor Revel's."

"Please!" Madeline cried.

"Forgive us, Mademoiselle," the governor said suavely, "but you must be protected from this cheap trick. Obviously our famous actor has heard that your *aristocratic* suitors couldn't win you. So he comes under false colors, thinking to gain your favor. But if he were really sincere—"

All self-restraint left me. I whirled, caught the governor by the shoulders, thrust him back against the wall so roughly that his wide jaw sagged. At the same instant I caught a warning hiss from Gaston, and turned to see the four Heffles enter the room.

"What's the frame-up?" I snarled, releasing the red-faced governor. "Whatever it is, I defy anyone to say I'm not sincere. I don't care who you are—governor, scientist, or phoney butler—"

"This has gone far enough, Governor!" Dujardin spoke quietly, but there was something electrical about his words. For a tense moment the glares crisscrossed. What he and the governor and the four Heffles were silently saying to each other I could only won-

der. In my surge of temper I jumped at a passing suspicion—*the governor must be jealous! Every man who fell for Mademoiselle Butterfly must be his sworn enemy!*

If so, perhaps Gaston was right. Murder was the answer.

Little did I guess the actual complications. Gaston was tugging at my sleeve, whispering, "Let's get out of here, Quinton."

But it was the governor who broke the deadlock. With mysterious finality he said, "Well, Dujardin, there you are. The rest is up to you. I'll go. Good night."

He turned and walked off abruptly, and all four of the butlers escorted him out.

There was an awkward silence. The architect, completely dumbfounded by the strange turn of events, excused himself. There would be a big day's work tomorrow, and if Gaston and I were still his assistants, he said, we'd better turn in and get a night's sleep.

Gaston waved his hands helplessly and followed, leaving me alone with Madeline and her father. Again there was a tense silence. Then Dujardin said:

"I'm going to take you at your word, Monsieur. I would not have believed that the great Raymond Quinton would ever fall in love with my daughter—"

HE PAUSED, studying me with his kindly penetrating eyes.

"Who I am makes no difference," I declared. "I'm in love with Madeline. I'll always be in love with her. No earthquakes or wars—or jealous governors can change that."

"He can't be jealous!" Madeline said, brushing her eyes with a handkerchief.

"You may forget Governor Revel's seemingly rude interest in our affairs." said the scientist. "Whether you are an actor, a bricklayer, or a candlestick maker doesn't matter *in our world.* The thing that matters is whether you can withstand a particular test—"

His trembling fingers raised to his brow, hiding his eyes. I waited. But he seemed reluctant to go on. One of the Heffles passed quietly through the room. The scientist cleared his throat and continued.

"We call it the *Test of Dust.*"

"If it's a proof of my love," I said, "I can withstand it."

"It's more than that,' Dujardin said slowly. "It's a test of courage—vision —and other qualities not easily named —a test of one's kinship with Nature. I can assure you that Madeline shall not marry a man who is unequal to this challenge."

I looked to Madeline, caught the light of eager hope in her eyes.

"Very well," I said. "When do I start?"

"Tonight," said Dujardin. "At once."

WE DESCENDED to a basement room. Dujardin took pains to leave all doors open, mentioning that the way was open for me to back out whenever the test became severe.

"This door marked *EXIT,*" he said. as we paused in a brightly lighted circular alcove, "opens toward the narrows. In case you are interested, there is a steel cable which leads across to the Portugal shore."

"I won't be interested," I said.

"This door,' he pointed to the deep-set panel constructed of bark-covered slabs, "leads to the *Test of Dust.* Madeline will show you the way. And now . I leave you to your fate."

Before his retreating footsteps had died away, I had taken Madeline in my arms. Unsmiling, she looked up at me.

"I hope—I pray to God that you win!" she breathed. "Until I learned that you were Raymond Quinton, I was terribly in love with you."

"And now?"

"If you survive the test—" She finished by slowly nodding.

For one lingering dizzy moment I kissed her. There was nothing of the actor about me during that moment. Earnestly, feverishly, I knew, if I had not known it before, that I was ready to defy hell itself to win her.

She drew away from me, brushed her hair lightly, tilted her head with determination. "Now you must forget about me," she said softly. "This is the door."

On the panel of bark-covered slabs there was an inscription, a familiar Biblical quotation, neatly carved: "DUST THOU ART."

Three ominous words on the doorway to my fate!

I opened the door, propped a stone against it. All of the underground tunnels, Madeline said, found their way back to this brightly lighted alcove.

Hazy blue light wafted up like a luminous mist through the shadowy walls. Madeline was a silhouette before me, leading the way down the winding incline. Soon the bluish mists grew brighter. Mercury tubes appeared along the dark ceilings.

"In case the war spreads over Europe," Madeline said, "these treasures will all be preserved from bursting shells."

"Treaures?" I thought of jewels and precious metals.

"These specimens you are about to see," she said, "are our treasures—intricate models and dioramas that I've helped father mold. They tell the secrets of his knowledge."

A long straight passage opened before us and the first line of dioramas came into view—scores if not hundreds of them. They were like an endless line of miniature window displays along a sidewalk, their colored lights glowing on the black wall opposite.

WE MUST have devoted three hours to the study of these works of art. The secrets that they revealed need not be related in this record, for the telling could never do justice to the actual models.

Thus, for example, it is easy enough to state that the intricate skeletons of rabbits, turtles, and fish have *some* basic similarities; but actually to *see* these similarities in bona fide models is a much more vivid experience.

And yet, above and beyond the seeing is the fuller *appreciation* of the dramatic wonders involved—an appreciation that came home to me as I listened to Madeline. She was veritably on fire with her subject. To anyone with the slightest degree of imagination, this chain of nature revelations would be as novel and as shocking as a lift into another world.

"I can't see why anyone should be rebuffed by this so-called *Test of Dust,*" I said. "It's the most glorious array of wonders I ever witnessed."

"Doesn't it anger you?'

"Anger me! Why should it?'

"Maybe you're less aristocratic, at heart, than the previous guests of this maze," said Madeline. "Some puffed-up egos can't stand to be deflated. Doesn't it infuriate you to be reminded that your bodily cells divide no differently from those of a snake?"

"Not at all," I laughed.

"Some temperaments," said Madeline, "can't bear it. Some aristocrats have been led to believe that their blood is bluer than a common man's. Figuratively speaking, of course. Actually, blood is blue only when it is impure.

But these so-called blue-bloods usually see red if you remind them that they have a few properties in common with an earthworm. They do exactly what an earthworm does when it bumps into something disagreeable—they crawl the other way."

"It isn't very flattering," I said.

SHE looked at me intently, as if wondering whether I was thinking of crawling in the other direction.

"Ill leave you now," she said, as we turned a right angle. "This next row of exhibitions can be understood only if you study them carefully. I warn you that they deal *not with established fact, but with a theory far removed from scientific fact:* the theory that forms of life may be made to *revert* to earlier, simpler forms, and then, perhaps, be forced to *re-develop* along new lines."

"Do you believe the theory?"

"I'm waiting for further proofs," said Mademoiselle Butterfly noncommittally. "But my father is completely convinced. And now—for the present—I leave you to your own destiny."

It was a curious sensation, then, to see Mademoiselle Butterfly turning to leave me, walking on ahead through the rifle-barrel straight passage that I was to follow. For this new avenue, if I had calculated the right angle turns correctly, was the third side of a rectangular tunnel that would lead back to the Dust-Thou-Art doorway.

I watched her until she finally disappeared at the distant turn.

So this was the test that made aristocratic blood run cold! The absurdity of it. Obviously there was nothing to fear. I moved along the wall of windows slowly, thoughtfully.

Each new demonstration was more fanciful than the last. I was dizzy now with the curiosity of it all—like a child being told all the mysteries of the earth, sun, and stars in a single night.

Shortly I observed something very puzzling. The windows were diminishing in height. The change was very gradual, but without exception each window squatted a bit closer to the floor than the last.

Soon I was bending down to get the full effect of each little window display. The row of dioramas stretched ahead with an effect of distance that was deceptive, for the shrinking dimensions played tricks on my eyes. The tunnel's ceiling seemed to be rising to loftier heights.

I moved along on my hands and knees. At last I came to a sharp turn in the passage—*and there stood Madeline.*

"I waited for you," she said, smiling down at me. "I saw that you were still coming, so—"

"I'm following through to the end," I declared. Strange as it may seem, I didn't rise to my feet. I could see another series of low-set lights in the new avenue ahead.

"There's a dangerous pit within a few steps," she said. "Be careful."

SHE led the way slowly. I crawled along, viewing the little windows in the walls. Perhaps we were near sea level. At least we came to a narrow stream of brilliant green waters, glittering through a break in the floor.

The jagged break grew wider, the footpath narrowed. The brilliant green of the waters cast a weird lambency across the clay walls.

"Slippery footsteps ahead," Madeline warned, "but there's a rope to hold onto."

The gash widened into a liquid filled pit some twenty-five feet in diameter. Madeline rounded it with practiced step, catching the rope that hung from

rings in the low ceiling.

Still stooping, I tried to follow in her footsteps.

My step was not so lucky. I slipped, lost my balance, reached for the rope. But its slack slipped from my grasp, for Madeline had caught it, at the same moment, beyond the next ring. I splashed into the pit.

She looked back, and I fancied I saw an expression of disappointment. "Do you need any help?"

"I'm all right," I said, catching hold of the rocky ledge. The water—if water it was—sucked against my body like something alive—like an octopus with a thousand tentacles attacking me everywhere at once.

I scrambled out onto the solid tunnel floor.

Mademoiselle Butterfly bent down, handed me a handkerchief to swab my face.

"Listen!" she said sharply. "Did you hear someone calling?"

Out of the hollow silence there came a dim prolonged echo of an "O-o-o-oh!"

It came twice again. It seemed to come from neither direction—or perhaps from both. It might have been someone calling, "Hello!" or, "Quinton!" but the consonants were lost in distant echoes.

Naturally I thought of Gaston. It would be like him to try to follow me.

But Madeline evidently thought it was her father.

"I've stayed with you too long," she said. "I must hurry."

Once more I watched her as she departed down the long straight tunnel. It was a scene I was destined to recall, in the light of subsequent events. I distinctly saw her walking away from me, walking as fast as she could without running, passing the low-set little windows whose light flicked across her ankles. Finally the lights seemed to run out and she was swallowed up in darkness.

WHAT happened from then on was like a nightmare too weird for words.

My soaked flesh was undergoing strange sensations, hardly to be classified as pain, yet utterly unlike any normal feeling. I seemed to be shrinking.

The windows, however, were growing much smaller, confusing my sense of proportions. Again I began to concentrate on the wonderful displays—dainty little show-case specimens of reptiles and birds. I was strangely attracted. Here were fish, birds, and winged lizards all brought together in a single structure study. It was well worth crawling on your belly to see.

Yes, I was crawling. *And it was easy!* My abdominal muscles were responding so well that I felt a strange and unnatural power. Had that green fluid given me some special strength? I felt lighter, smaller, and yet far more agile.

These changes might have been frightfully disturbing but for the little window displays. Before my eyes the crawling habits of caterpillars were analyzed. For an organism that has to crawl (even as I was having to crawl) the bodily structure of the caterpillar was very advantageous.

Suddenly I discovered that a ceiling was close over my head. Surely I was coming toward the end of the passage—But, no. Madeline had walked upright! Something was wrong here. Had I been sidetracked? I tried to turn back.

But this was no place to turn. The ceiling, a series of flaps, slipped over my back readily enough as long as I went forward, but caught me fast when I tried to reverse my direction.

For a few minutes I stopped, fight-

ing off a panic of fear. As I moved forward the valve effect of the ceiling extended around the walls to the floor beneath my abdomen. It gave my whole body a sensation of being ridged or humped, like a tight string of beads. My arms and legs must have become paralyzed. They felt as if they had shrunk into nothing.

Occasionally a spray of the green liquid would shower down over me, perhaps from hidden springs in the wall. Then the shrinking sensation would come over me again, and I would be able to move forward more easily.

At last there were no more little windows to light my way. I was groping along through absolute darkness, crawling up an inclined passage that pressed in ever tighter coils around my beaded body.

In the midst of this physical torment I heard the hollow echo of a "Hallooo-oo!" Gaston's voice!

I tried to answer. To my utter horror my voice had gone back on me. All I could manage was a weak, piping little "Hello-o-o!" that was less than the chirping of a cricket.

Once I wormed about enough to see a dim amber gleam from somewhere far back of me—enough to convince me Gaston was on the search with a lantern. By this time I was in a frenzy to get out. Gaston was right—this was a game of murder!

The sickening truth struck me like that terror of terrors—*the crushing of a heel!* Why the suitors of Mademoiselle Butterfly should be murdered was more than I could guess. But murder this must be, contrived by the ingenuity of that innocent-mannered scientist.

"H-E-L-L-O-O-, Q-U-I-N-T-O-N-!"

"Hello! Hello! Hello!"

My voice seemed so tiny and insignificant I couldn't hope to be heard.

Gaston finally passed out of hearing. He must have seen his way to the tunnel's outlet—the way I had missed. *But he had left the lantern.* Through the porous walls that enclosed me I could see a faint amber glow. And the gentle comforting warmth that seeped through me was my last sensation before my consciousness gave way to death-like blackness.

AT LAST I awoke and crept forth into daylight.

That sleep had been good, but too long. Many days long, I was sure.

I walked forth weakly, giddily. The wind threatened to blow me over. My instinctive sense of balance was sharp —extraordinarily so—but I felt the need of limbering up my stiff muscles. I was all folded up, so to speak.

For a long time I stood motionless. Everything was too dazzlingly bright. Where was I?

I was standing on the edge of an outcropping rock which resembled a gigantic chunk of pink taffy candy. I had just emerged from one of the caverns which honeycombed that rock. Towering above me was a mammoth vine which wove upward through an immense white trellis. On that vine were the most magnificent roses—

Instinctively I wanted to fly!

Instinctively I knew there was food in those roses.

But instinct and human intelligence crashed head-on. I shuddered. The unspeakably dreadful thing had happened. I knew it on the instant—and my shadow proved it.

For minutes I stood there trembling. But all the while I could feel the fluid of my body surging outward through the veins of my wings, filling me with power and confidence. *I wanted to fly!*

But in the very same breath I wanted something else—a sinister something

that belongs in the human catalog of wants—*revenge*.

Thus before I had even tried my wings, or crept to the window to observe what I looked like in my new form, I found myself torn apart, figuratively, like a machine with two motors pulling in opposite directions.

The butterfly instincts cried out for gayety and sunshine. The human feelings revolted against this heinous crime of science.

As soon as I could adjust myself to the vast proportions of the flower garden and laboratory walls that surrounded me, I marched forth for that memorable first look at myself. A basement window became my mirror.

AS A butterfly I was a giant. My wings were as large as any I ever saw on a bona fide butterfly. They were a deep red blending into purple close to my body.

But I was far more than a butterfly. My body was as large and plump as the body of any moth. And yet it was human in form. I possessed well-formed arms and legs and a round little head with a doll-like face. But, curiously enough, in addition to the human tongue in my mouth I possessed a butterfly tongue—a long hollow tube which I could uncoil from under my nose whenever I wanted to suck the nectar out of flowers.

I fed myself, tried my wings in a momentous first flight, learned that I could camouflage myself from the curious eyes of bona fide butterflies by hiding among brown leaves with my wings closed.

Presently I heard a conversation from one of the laboratory rooms and I crept along the window sill to listen.

"Please, Madeline," the scientist was pleading. "Don't be so despondent. You haven't smiled for days. Cheer up, can't you? We've got so many interesting experiments to do. . But I haven't a heart for anything when you're so blue."

Bitterness swept through me. "Interesting experiments!" I thought. "Dastardly crimes—luring men to these laboratories—transforming them into insects—*for what?* For the fanciful pleasure of Mademoiselle Butterfly! All because she loves butterflies!"

I was trembling to the fingertips—yes, and to the wing-tips! The mad desire for revenge was already chasing murder schemes through my tiny brain.

I listened. Madeline was moaning softly. Was it possible that she suffered an attack of conscience after playing her part in one of these vicious experiments?

I moved farther along the window sill, hoping to catch a glimpse of her face. Unfortunately a stack of books cut off my view. Slowly, cautiously I crawled through the open window into the room, down onto the table, past the heap of books.

I stopped short and my wings automatically folded. I had come within sight of Dujardin. He sat within three feet of me, resting one arm on the edge of the table. Like everything about me he looked gigantic. But it was his expression that fascinated me. Strange, I thought, that a man can appear so innocent and yet be so cruel.

"Do you know what's going to happen today, Madeline?" he said in a low sympathetic voice. "You're going to have another new synthetic butterfly . One that you can call Raymond Quin—"

"Please, father, don't say it! I can't stand the thought!"

"Calm yourself, child. You're my partner, you know. My world is your world. My scientific discoveries are yours."

HE SAID it with compassion, and yet to me it represented the bluntest admission of cruelty—an admission that Madeline was as guilty as he. If I had had any doubts on this score before, these words erased them. How my passions mocked me!

But now Madeline spoke, in a chill hurt voice, and her words hurled me back into confusion.

"Father," she said, "you have always told me that. I've wanted to be your partner, to share all your knowledge. But you have kept secrets from me."

Dujardin looked down at the desk intently. I slipped back out of sight. Then through a crack among the books I could see Madeline's beautiful face, the beads that hung at her throat, her trembling fingers. My hatred melted. It was not only her beauty, nor her tear-filled eyes; it was a magnetic radiance—something subtle that my butterfly instincts sensed—something that connoted friendliness.

"Father," she pursued. "I want to go on sharing your work, but you must answer my questions. I won't be put off this time. The disappointment is too deep."

"Madeline, you're pampering yourself. After all, he *was* the great Quinton. You've read about him. You know he has been a ruthless heart-crusher—"

"*Why* did he fail the *Test of Dust*, father? He didn't lack courage. Nor understanding. And he did love me. I know it! Oh, *why* did he have to submit to the test in the first place?"

I crept back to the corner of the stack of books to gaze at Dujardin. He looked old, and his kindly face was a study in turmoil. His eyes seemed to be boring holes through the table.

"And why," Madeline's voice continued, "must these four walking statues always live with us, watching over our shoulders, listening to us talk, turning our home into a concentration camp? Why, father, won't you ever tell me? I know there must be something dreadful that you're hiding. If so, I want to share it."

"Madeline, my child, I think we are about through with the four Heffles. I've called the governor and asked him to arrange passages for them—"

His eyes, lifting slowly, came to a stop—*on me*.

I FLINCHED, and my instincts told me to fly. Instead, I froze in my tracks. But it was vain to hope that he didn't see me. His eyes widened, his lips parted. I could fairly feel his astonished gaze.

He rose slowly, and a wondrous amazement lighted his face. If I had been in sympathy with him I might have seen a glorious victory in his expression.

I ducked out of his sight, crept along the back of the books.

Over the top of the stack his arm suddenly appeared — causing me to crouch with fear—and closed the window. I heard him moving about, closing all the windows and doors.

"What's the matter, father?" Madeline asked.

"Matter, dear?" The exuberance in his voice was ill-suppressed. "I've just discovered—I mean, I've just *recalled*—"

"Yes?"

"I know now what became of that lost lantern—the one I used to mature the tadpoles."

"You've been worrying about that lantern for days," said Madeline.

"Gaston must have taken it to use for a flashlight the night that Raymond Quinton left us," said Dujardin. "You'll find it sitting on the floor near the end of the *Test* tunnel. Please go

get it at once."

Madeline left. Dujardin closed the door after her. Then he reached to the wall for a butterfly net.

And while his back was turned, I obeyed my instinct to take flight. I leaped up on a shelf and hid behind some bottles.

"QUINTON! Raymond Quinton! . Where are you hiding? Come out. I want to talk with you."

With his butterfly-net poised in his right hand, the scientist paced back and forth, his burning eyes combing the walls, the floor, the nooks and crannies among the scientific apparatus.

"Quinton, wherever you are, I know you can hear me. Come out. I've *got* to talk with you. Everything depends upon it."

He mopped perspiration from his cheeks and the backs of his hands.

"Quinton!"

Desperation was in his voice. He laid down the net and began moving books, test tubes, *bottles*.

"Oh, there you are! Thank goodness. I was afraid you'd got out before I closed the window. That would be dangerous. You're the answer to a scientist's dream, but you mustn't fall into the wrong hands. Do you understand me?"

Between two bottles I peered out at him defiantly, but I was trembling from toes to wing-tips.

"Listen to me, Quentin," he said, drawing closer. "The four Heffles mustn't see you. And Governor Revel—"

A knock sounded at the door.

"Stay where you are," Dujardin whispered.

Did he think I was in danger of running off, with all the doors and windows closed?

Well, I was. Hiding behind those bottles had given me ideas. My brain might be small but it was on fire with purpose of my own. A bottle of poison would be all I needed to wreak my revenge. But I mustn't be captured.

The scientist opened the door long enough to admit Gaston.

"I've come to say goodbye," said Gaston. He was dressed for travel, but he removed his hat, opened his coat, and started to open a window.

"Please!" the scientist restrained him. "I'm keeping a certain temperature."

"Yes, and I'm running a temperature," said Gaston. "This place is a bake-oven. But it's all for science, I suppose."

"It's all for science," Dujardin smiled, breaking off to give me a stern look.

Nobody seemed to know it, but I was yelling, *"Gaston! Gaston!"* at the top of my voice. What a fate! My shrill little notes must have been too high for the human eardrum to hear.

NEVERTHELESS, I meant for Gaston to see me. I flew down from the shelf—and Dujardin swung the net over me with a deft wrist. He tossed me—net and all—into a large drawer and closed it. It all happened so swiftly and easily that Gaston didn't even see me. If he had he might have paid no attention, for he was preoccupied with his own affairs.

"I may have judged you too harshly, Dujardin," he was saying. "I'll admit I was pretty much wrought up on the night that Quinton disappeared."

"You thought that I had sent him away?" said the scientist.

"I thought worse things than that. You see, in the first place I couldn't conceive of Quinton's failing in any fair test. In the second place I was sure

that if he did fail, he wouldn't sneak off the island by cable. And I still don't understand his doing it. But he must have."

"What do you mean?" said the scientist.

From the rattle I knew that Gaston must have been taken a newspaper from his pocket.

"If this news story is correct," said Gaston, "Raymond Quinton is now in a hospital, wounded from an air crash."

"Ugh?" the scientist gulped.

"He flew a pursuit plane during the march on Paris. He must have reported within twenty-four hours after he left here. And you know how fast things have gone to pieces."

"M-m-m."

"So I'm heading back to the continent at once. He may be in bad shape. I want to see him."

"Yes—so do I."

"Would you come along?" Gaston asked eagerly.

"Ugh—no—no. I couldn't think of it. My experiments, you know. I'm in a dilemma—"

"I thought so. You're all needles and pins. But this damned room is so warm—" There were sounds of opening windows and Gaston concluded, "There, you'll feel better."

Then a taxi honked and one of the Heffles trooped in to help Gaston off. The scientist made him promise he would return with a report on Raymond Quinton's condition. Gaston promised and departed.

The scientist opened the drawer, squinted his eyes at me dubiously. He got a magnifying glass and looked me over from all angles. He was troubled.

"I wish I knew," he said, "whether you can understand me."

While he was muttering over me, Madeline returned and the lantern with the amber beam was in her hand.

"How did you know I'd find it there, father?" she asked.

His back was turned to her and he began to wad the net around me.

It was pointing straight at the lower end of that pink stone you turned into a butterfly hatchery," she continued. "You don't suppose the beam will have any effect on the new butterfly you promised me?"

"Come here, Madeline," said the scientist gravely. "I've something to show you."

MADELINE bent over the net eagerly, then, seeing me, drew back in amazement. I trembled, uncertain whether the sight of me was repulsive. Her shocked expression turned into delight.

"What a curious little fellow!"

"That's what the lantern did," said the scientist.

I flapped my wings and tried to get out.

"Oh. Isn't he the clever little thing. Why, he's a regular little man."

The scientist caught his breath as if afraid to speak.

"Father, how ever did you do it? I think it's wonderful! Aren't you pleased?"

"Should I be?" he said.

"But of course! It's your proof, at last! If you've taken an ordinary butterfly chrysalis and made it develop—"

"We won't discuss the methods just yet, my dear. I don't want you to tell anyone—"

"Oh, we can't keep it a secret! This is a discovery! You'll be famous! When you tell your fellow scientists—"

"I'll tell them nothing," said Dujardin stoutly. "Their respect is more important to me than anything else in the world. I'd die before I'd lose it."

"What are you talking about?"

Madeline managed to take her eyes off me, turning them challengingly on her father. "Can there be anything disreputable about this? You've treated a butterfly chrysalis in a new way and created a new creature—and he's cunning! Look at him. He's going to be my friend right from the start."

"Madeline, listen to me," Dujardin said severely. "In this house we never know when the butlers are eavesdropping. They mustn't learn of this. Never. Do you hear?"

"Yes."

"And the governor—you mustn't tell him either."

"I won't tell. There's only one person in the world that I might tell."

"You mean—"

"Raymond Quinton. He would understand, father. He understood everything in the *Test-of-Dust*. I know he did. I could never keep a secret from him. That's how it is when you love someone deeply—"

"So you loved him deeply." Dujardin's thoughts seemed to be a hundred miles away. He became silent. I knew better than Madeline the deep conflict that tormented him. Not until Gaston returned from the continent would he know whether I was Raymond Quinton or some freak of nature that had sprung from an unknown source.

Madeline murmured dreamily that she was thinking of writing a letter to Raymond Quinton.

Her father advised against it. The mail service was so badly disrupted from the march on Paris, he said, that a letter would never reach Quinton, wherever he might be.

Disconsolate, Madeline decided to go to her butterflies; but instead, she began talking to me, lifting my net to admire my bright colors as I fluttered under her hands.

"You're a little wonder!" she said.

Just then Z. Heffle stepped into the room.

MADELINE gathered my net close in her hands to keep me out of sight, and catching a cue from her father she thrust me into the big open drawer.

"The governor to see you," said Z. Heffle.

Madeline went out, when Governor Revel marched in. The doors were closed. Evidently the governor desired a private conversation with Dujardin alone. I wondered if I had been forgotten. Fortunately, I hadn't given away my advantage—that I could hear and understand every word that was said.

"You're a bit premature, aren't you, Dujardin, trying to send your four butlers away?"

"I've finished," said Dujardin bitterly. "Yon can call off your watchdogs."

"You don't have to be uncivil," Governor Revel's voice took on that satiny tone that I never trusted. "If you've fulfilled your end of the bargain, our beautiful friendship goes on untarnished. But I've a suspicion," his words suddenly struck out like pointed icicles, "that not all of those ten murders have been committed."

"Governor Revel! What are you saying!" These words were so much camouflage, I was certain, for the scientist followed up with a tense whisper. "Some one might be listening."

"What's the difference?" Governor Revel snapped. "The Heffles know. If your daughter gets in on it, that's her own fault. All right. You remember our bargain—"

"It wasn't a bargain!" Dujardin's words were like steel.

"I put the Heffles here to *make* it a

bargain," the governor snarled. "Fortunately I had you squirming. You had made one little scientific mistake that involved a life and I knew it. And I knew you were in a sweat to make your fellow scientists think you had a clear record."

"So you had me," said Dujardin coldly. "And you browbeat me into doing murders for you. Do we have to go into all that?"

"It's my theme song," said the governor in gloating tones. "It's my bedtime prayer. It's my Sunday dessert. Ten political enemies on the continent! They had rubbed me in the dust, the damned aristocrats! They had tried to hold me down!"

"And you became governor in spite of them." The scientist seemed to be forecasting the coming line of a familiar phonograph record.

"I—the hater of aristocrats—became this island's governor in spite of them! But every one of the damned hyenas had a nephew or a *son*—and I didn't forget."

"So you plotted revenge."

"Yes, and you were the man to help me. I learned about that natural pit of green water, somewhere in the tunnels under this hill—green water that would shrink and shrivel any creature—*what was that noise?*"

THE noise was my scrambling around inside the butterfly net. I was going to get out of this prison or break my wings trying. I had heard enough. If there was any way in the world to give this information to Madeline—to tell her that her father had been framed—

"There's something in that drawer," the governor growled.

"A mouse most likely. See here, Governor Revel, I'm terribly busy. If you've come to gloat about getting rid of your enemies without staining your hands—"

"*Have* I got rid of them?" The governor shouted it so fiercely my antennae shook. "How do I know you've put these ten deals over? What evidence do I have?"

"What evidence do you want?"

The governor disregarded the question. He was raving, now. "How do I know that you haven't hoaxed me, the same as you've hoaxed your daughter, telling her that her lovers escaped by the cable. How do I know but what they *did* escape by the cable?"

This was too much for me. I gulped. The cold facts were coming thick and fast, now. Almost faster than I could swallow them. And yet I could readily believe, when I recalled Gaston's doubts about the cable story, that this was simply a convenient falsehood for Madeline's benefit. Yes, and for the benefit of all who might try to raise a fuss about the mysterious disappearance of ten men.

While Dujardin struggled to evade the charge that he must have known was coming, I managed to crawl out of the net and slip down over the rear end of the drawer, dropping softly to the floor.

I picked my path carefully, crept to a hiding place within a foot of a doorsill. The door fit badly, and I had an even chance of squeezing through.

By this time the governor was confronting Dujardin with the same jarring newspaper story that Gaston had found.

"It says Raymond Quinton is in a hospital," the governor spat. "Quinton was the last man on my list. Several days ago we sent him into the *Test of Dust*—and you, my fine-feathered friend, checked him off. What kind of liar does this make you?"

I couldn't have chosen a moment of

colder silence for my climb through the door. But I wouldn't be seen, for I knew that the two men were glaring at each other.

By springing my wings ever so slightly I made it. I was out—free—

But a huge rough hand clapped down over me—I had forgotten to beware of eavesdroppers! Within the fingers of W. Heffle I was again a prisoner.

W. HEFFLE blinked at me approximately twenty times. Then he kicked on the door and grunted, "Let me in. I got something to show you."

The scientist may or may not have welcomed this intrusion. With or without me, he was in a spot.

One Heffle called another until the four of them crowded into the room, joining the governor and Dujardin in gazing at me. Dujardin placed me in an empty fishbowl and laid a piece of thick plate glass over the top, leaving a crack for air.

I was pained to have them glaring at me, making a side-show out of me. But in spite of my humiliation I realized by this time that *my* feelings were of secondary importance. Monsieur Dujardin was in a hot spot. I no longer misjudged him. He had been fighting a set of ruthless criminals all these years. Yes, and single-handed. But they were closing in on him with a vengeance at last.

What Dujardin had done to me, and to nine other men that the governor had tricked into coming under Madeline's spell, was crime enough to leave an unforgivable blot on science. No one could deny that. But the fact remained that Dujardin had not murdered us.

His ingenuity had contrived to keep us alive, at least.

Yes, at the risk of his own life, under the very eyes of those four stiff owl-eyed thugs, he had dared to defy orders, and had gotten away with it.

Moreover, he'd been clever enough to hide the whole game from his daughter, had kept her in a realm of beauty and idealism, away from the sordid. No wonder her innocence was such that even butterflies could instinctively feel her warmth and friendship.

But what would happen to her when the scientist's game exploded? I dreaded to think how horrified she would be. She must be warned, before this ugly business broke in her face.

These thoughts flooded through my tiny brain as I waited amid the stifling air of the fish bowl.

The sight of me had uncorked perturbed speculations in the mind of Governor Revel. He paced the floor, snapping his fingers, champing his wide jaws. Everytime around he stopped for another look at me.

"So that's what comes of your science," he growled. "Along with all your baloney-stuffed lectures you can really turn out something. Um-m-m I think you're pulling a fast one, Dujardin."

THE Heffles grunted their agreement. The scientist thumbed through some notes absently. Even when they prodded him with sharp questions he made a fair show of ignoring them.

I knew well enough that Dujardin was confused. After that news account of Raymond Quinton, he couldn't be sure about me.

But he kept his mouth shut. He was wise enough to know that the governor was confused too.

"Have you Heffles seen any other specimens like that?" Governor Revel asked.

The Heffles hadn't. No synthetic butterfly had ever been developed along these lines before. They were sure of that.

"Do you Heffles know how he goes about it to develop one of the damned things?"

The four butlers had to admit they didn't. The scientific processes were too complicated. They could never be sure what the scientist was working on from one time to the next.

"A fine quartet you are," the governor snorted, "letting this happen right under your eyes. You'd better take care that he doesn't mix a couple of you fellows into butterfly batter—*ugh!*"

The governor's words broke off with a husky grunt, as if someone had slugged him in the chest. "Wait a minute, boys, maybe I have an idea there. Tell me. how often have these synthetic butterflies appeared?"

Dujardin, of course, refused to answer. But the four Heffles began to pool their observations on the matter. They quickly stumbled onto a formula.

There had been nine butterflies in all, they agreed—ten, counting me—and when one of them had been killed during Maurice De Brosse's duel, they remembered, both the scientist and the girl had been terribly upset.

"The point is," said Y. Heffle, getting hot on the trail that the governor was after, "the girl has got a new butterfly for every boy friend that got cancelled."

"Now we're getting places, aren't we, Dujardin?" The governor smiled evilly at the scientist. "Maybe some of your lectures about organisms that revert and then redevelop didn't go over my head after all."

"Purely hypothesis," said the scientist dryly, pretending to miss the other's implication, devoting all his attention, apparently, to the marking of chemical formulas on a scratch pad.

"How soon after the disappearance of each of my *special friends,*" the governor drew out the words with luxurious sarcasm, "did these synthetic butterflies come on the scene?"

AGAIN the Heffles lacked exact information. Several days, they were sure, in each instance.

"Then this damned little varmint," the governor said savagely "is in all probabilities a certain nephew of a certain cursed aristocrat who once threw mud in my face. The tenth number on my revenge list. *This is Raymond Quinton the actor.*"

Dujardin looked up and laughed in a mocking tone. He was playing his invisible cards as boldly as he dared.

"You're going to terrific lengths," Dujardin said, appearing greatly amused, "to make trouble for yourself out of nothing. Now that I've dispatched your ten men—"

"Or have you?"

"Now that I've dispatched them for you, virtually at the point of a gun, your moth-eaten conscience begins to hatch illusions. You're getting bats. You think your dead men will come to life. First you see them in news stories. Next you see them in butterflies. Next they'll be jumping at you right out of your soup—"

"Very funny, Dujardin," the governor snapped. "But I'm on the inside track, now. Whichever way the wind blows, you'll get your reward for your obedient and noble services."

"Meaning what?"

"When I find the first trace that any of those ten men are living, you're through. I'll give you the honor of being number eleven on my list. And you're daughter—well, I've got some ideas about her too."

In spite of the alert Heffles, the scientist straightened to his feet, clenched his fists, and shot a hard challenging eye at the governor.

"A fine business! Conjuring up false guilt for innocent people," Dujardin said, and his whitened lips measured every word. "If I were the blackest criminal in the world, that wouldn't make Madeline guilty—"

"I'm far ahead of you, Dujardin," said the governor suavely. "Don't I know that *if* you've pulled some strange butterfly miracle over my ten men, you did it for a purpose? You did it thinking there'd be a chance to bring them back. Back to men! And you'd try it, too. The minute you thought you were through with me. Wouldn't you? You or your daughter. Don't answer, you sphinx. But I'm not so dumb."

THE words were nerve-shattering, and their volume reechoed terrifyingly in my fish bowl.

"In a few days, said the governor. "Gaston, the comedian, will come back from a visit he's making to a hospital on the continent. He's gone to check up on what I think must be a false news story. He's promised to stop on the way back and let me know whether Raymond Quinton is alive. No, he doesn't know my purpose. He thinks I'm Quinton's friend. But when I get that report, I'll know what's what."

He paused, and all four Heffles as well as the scientist watched him thumb through the calendar.

"He'll soon be back," the governor went on. "Meanwhile I'll take a new interest in those other synthetic butterflies. Where are they?"

"Flying around wherever they please," said the scientist evasively.

"They huddle together out in the flower garden at night," said X. Heffle, turning to the window. "We could gather them up for you. Right out there—"

He opened the window and pointed.

Governor Revel nodded, observing that a once-over might be in order right away. "And this little mannish-looking freak with the red wings *we'll keep*—"

The scientist, backing out of the governor's way, struck the lid of my bowl with his elbow. The glass clattered over the edge of the table and crashed to the floor. I flew out the window.

And I hadn't needed any butterfly instincts to tell me it was time to fly. I knew, as well as I knew my name was Louis Ribot, that Dujardin had knocked that glass lid off on purpose.

WAR had been pounding across France in unprecedented blitzkriegs, during recent days, and its hatreds. fears, and tragedies had not failed to shake the island of Fraise.

But that the treacherous governor of this French island should dream of selling out to the enemy somehow had not occurred to me. And yet, for one of his rashness and lack of principle, it was what I should have expected.

What I heard, during the remainder of the show-down conversation between him and his scientist-stooge, convinced me that this was one of his alternative plans: to invite Nazi bombers to come over and clean up the mess he had started.

For at heart Governor Revel was scared white. The magic of science had him quivering in his boots. After seeing me. he knew that anything might happen. One or all of his ten victims might materialize before him—they might sprout from bulbs or hatch from eggs or jump out of water spouts—*unless he crushed out this whole realm of experimentation.*

He told Dujardin bluntly that a word to the German military staff would be the surest way to make a clean sweep of every damned haunt, butterfly, chrysalis, or test tube.

"I'll give you one week to come out with the whole truth—or else." With that threat he departed, leaving the four Heffles alert at their posts.

The days moved slowly.

I kept out of sight to be sure the Heffles wouldn't recapture me.

I often visited Madeline's sunny south room, where the new French windows admitted lights of many hues. The other butterflies would be there, playing over the girl's lovely hair, chasing boldly down her arms, taking off from her fingertips. She called them each by name, but only one of them did I know—the blue and silver one named Maurice.

Maurice knew me, too, I assumed, for Madeline had begun to call me Raymond. But all of Maurice's pugnacious tendencies seemed to be glossed over with butterfly instincts. Like the others he was bright, cheery, playful—not malicious in the slightest. I couldn't help wondering whether he would have been the same if he had been as well developed as I, or whether he would have liked to finish our unfinished duel.

Then I observed something startling. Gradually he was changing—yes, and so were the others. Especially those who basked in the light of a certain amber-colored window. Though the changes were slight they were unmistakable. In the course of a week one butterfly that spent hours in the amber light acquired a heavier body, a rounder head, and the beginnings of tiny arms and legs—not the legs of the *lepidoptera,* but *human* arms and legs.

THEN I knew what the scientist had meant, instructing the architect to make mosaics of some specially prepared glass to be useful in laboratory experiments. Tadpoles and other forms of animal life which the scientist sometimes exposed to this amber window light developed with magical speed. It had the same effect as the amber lantern had had on me.

However, when Dujardin found any of us butterflies basking in the amber, he would call to Madeline to take us away. And so the changes in our butterfly bodies were suspended, and remained too slight for Madeline ever to notice.

I felt terrible, and if I hadn't been sturdy I would have had a nervous breakdown. For I knew what no one else except Dujardin knew—that we were figuratively living on dynamite with the fuse already lighted beneath us.

As I already stated, I was determined to put Mademoiselle Butterfly wise to the dangers. How? I didn't know. My butterfly talents were too ineffectual to make any impression. All my human knowledge was no good unless I could find some way to communicate it.

No little pet dog could have trailed any more persistently after its master than I trailed after her. I continually fluttered at her ears, crying at the top of my piping voice.

"It's me, Madeline. Can't you hear me? I've got something terribly important to tell you. Listen to me."

She would smile at me, and pet me, and call me a rogue for tickling her ears. But she couldn't seem to hear my voice.

"Madeline, you've got to know that I'm not what you think I am. I didn't come from a butterfly chrysalis. I'm a man—the actor you loved Your father changed me. That green fluid—the pressures inside that false tunnel—"

I tried to spell words out, waving my hands. I tried to make use of the dot and dash code, sometimes with my arms, sometimes my wings. Occasionally I succeeded in making her intensely curious. Then other butterflies would swerve around her diverting her attention. Sometimes when she would be

reading a book I would alight on the edge and start pointing to letters.

But she would brush me away, telling me I was full of funny tricks. To her there was no more purpose in my actions than in the endless random fluttering of the others.

And yet she must have sensed that there was a difference. Once while she was standing by the large window, radiating her friendliness and beauty to all of us, she turned to gaze at me.

I HAPPENED to be perched on the carved pedestal at the moment, *as if I were on a stage*. Perhaps it was her beauty, the loveliness of her honey-colored hair, the sunlight glinting from the myriad strings of beads at her throat, the costume effect of her yellow silk sleeves and full-skirted brown dress. There was all the glamor of footlights and music about her.

I began to act.

Unheard though my voice was, I went straight through a climax from a Moliere play, with the grandest gestures ever.

"Why, Raymond Quinton," she said, and there was a startled, haunted note in her voice, "you're a regular actor—just like your name's sake."

That was as near as I came to it—until I stumbled upon my bazaar method of writing.

Mademoiselle Butterfly was writing a letter that night. It was a love letter meant for me. I watched over her shoulder, and from time to time she spoke to me. But she did not *know*. I was only a cunning little pet, affording a little solace. She crumpled the letter, half-finished, and started another. But she went to sleep over her desk.

The ink bottle was open. I tried to dip the pen, but it was too heavy and awkward for me to handle. Then came the remarkable discovery. My little six-inch butterfly tongue coiled up under my nose could suck nectar. Why couldn't it suck ink? It could deposit pollen. Why couldn't it deposit ink?

Within a few minutes I had succeeded writing my first words with swift, delicate strokes. That was the beginning of this journal, written between the printed lines of this book.

"The invisible trap was closing in on me," I began, "on the night I finished my sell-out week at the Fraise Theater."

The more I wrote, the easier the tongue worked. The ink fairly flew, that night; for once I had begun my story, I wanted to complete it before showing it to Madeline.

There were two other evenings that Madeline fell asleep over letters, and each morning following she was mystified over the way the ink was disappearing, jokingly accusing me of drinking it.

Meanwhile, every hour brought Governor Revel's deadline closer.

THE end came swiftly.

For three of my fellow butterflies it was a violent end with no warning whatsoever. Evidently the governor had instructed the Heffles to kill all of us at once. They killed the first three they could get their hands on. By that time I was crying warnings to the others.

My butterfly habits might have been enough to convey a sense of danger to the others, but by this time I had made the remarkable discovery that my voice, unheard by persons, carried perfectly to my winged fellows. We became an army of six to fight our own battles. I had learned something about ink that would apply equally well to poison.

We hid out until dusk, then raided the laboratory shelves. The strength of my arms was barely sufficient. I uncorked the bottle, each of us filled our little tubular tongues with poison. We slipped into the bedchambers of the Heffles and waited, biding our time until the snoring began.

Three snores were silenced that night.

Early the next morning W. Heffle, who had paced the grounds all night keeping vigil, beat his fists against a bedchamber window trying to rouse his brothers. We swooped down on him, a deadly little army of five butterflies. Five, not six, for one unfortunate member had succumbed to the poison.

I'll never forget the heroic attack that Maurice De Brosse made in his last fight. His flashy blue and silver wings caught the early morning light, made the butler start. Maurice cut in with all the daring of a champion swordsman. Twice Heffle's swinging palm grazed his wings. The third stroke landed squarely. Maurice fell to the sidewalk and W. Heffle stamped on him, cursing.

But the rest of us took our advantage when W. Heffle opened his mouth to curse. We flew at his face, sprayed poison on his tongue. Heffle, swinging at us, gulped and gagged—then sank into a heap .

These may be the last words I'll get to write. Nazi bombers have circled over.

Gaston has not returned.

Madeline, so far as I know, still hasn't learned her father's awful secret. Until a few minutes ago she was lying on the bed weeping. She thinks her father must have murdered the four Heffles. He denied it, of course, but his face has been white and stony, and he has loaded a pistol, knowing that the governor is sure to discover—

I've tried several times to write brief messages to Madeline, but so far I've had no luck—

The bombers are coming—

Madeline and Dujardin are carrying valuables down into the tunnel

I RETURN to my journal, hoping to complete another brief entry.

The ruin was almost complete. The governor got more than he bargained for. Besides bombing of these laboratories the Nazis decided to turn the whole island into a grave-yard. They landed in boats, set fire to houses, demolished the governor's mansion, marched up the hillsides killing every living thing in their path.

Both Gaston and the governor arrived here just as the shambles began. Gaston helped Madeline and her father pack things into the tunnel—and he gave them the big news—that there were two Raymond Quintons—the real one, and *me, a double.*

The governor raved like a mad man. until little Gaston had to knock his teeth in to shut him up. The governor knew now that we, the butterflies, had killed his henchmen.

And Dujardin, for once, minced no words and dodged no issues. He had turned ten men into butterflies, and he was all set to add a few more specimens to his collection. Wherever the bombs dropped, they'd never reach the amber lantern or the synthetic butterfly hatchery, he said.

Most surprising to me was the way Madeline stood up under it all. The faith that she had in her father was something I'll never forget. She wasn't flinching from bombs, and she wasn't unnerved to hear the blunt truth about the game of murder-and-butterfly.

"Did you already know?" Her father turned the question on her sharply.

"I've been reading all about it," she said, "in a journal written *by* a butterfly." She looked over her shoulder to see me fluttering through the tunnel entrance after her. She nodded with a quick smile. "Quinton—or whatever your name is, I *know* you now. *Stay with us—*"

Blasts drowned her voice. The bombs were going to catch us on this round. And they did.

Then there was a lull, and I found my way out into the open. The ground forces were coming up fast. I saw Gaston ride across the narrows to the Portugal side. Dujardin had invited him to share the tunnel, but Gaston had refused, having seen too much of the Nazi tactics back on the continent. He was sure the tunnel would be as thoroughly blitzkrieged as the rest of the island.

I SAW Governor Revel try to follow Gaston for a steel cable escape. The governor's terror was pitiful to see. He had brought this death on himself, but he still thought he could escape it. When he found the pulley gone, he ran back to the laboratory, tried to break into the tunnel entrance. It stood solid against his blows. Fire was crackling from the front of the mansion. Light tanks were crushing the zig-zagging chain of laboratories.

The governor raced back to the steel cable. I flew along to a sheltered spot on the bank to watch him. He tried to cross, hand over hand. It was slow going. Well out over the water he struggled to hang on. Then a plane zoomed down spraying machine-gun bullets and riddled him. He dropped to the water, a mass of shreds.

All has been quiet for many days.

Eventually there will be more activity, for the armed force that spared no life—except for a few insects—will soon come in greater numbers. They will turn what was once a laboratory for life into a fortress of death.

There was so little left of the white-brick mansion that I had to search many hours before finding the ink and the book that make up this journal.

But where life has been wiped out, there life will begin again.

Today two new creatures emerged from a slab of porous pink colored rock that always reminds me of a huge piece of taffy candy.

They were damp, helpless creatures until their wings had had time to stiffen. But their little bodies, like my own, were human in form.

The larger of the two was a little man with a round though slightly wrinkled face, sharp eyes that were courageous, however tiny. He flew at once to inspect the ruins of the building, and when he came back there was an interesting glint of good cheer in his funny little face. The amber windows that we would need someday, he told us in his piping voice, were still standing.

Then the wings of the other little creature began to spread proudly. She was a lovely yellow butterfly, but her round little face was framed in the luxurious spun-gold hair, and her body was a perfect little female figure, as graceful as her glorious yellow wings.

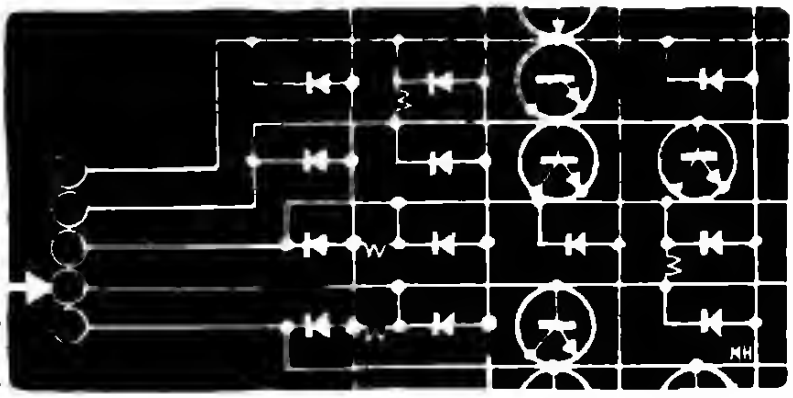
"Now we're even," she said to me in a funny little voice. "Really, it won't be so bad, being butterflies for awhile. And father thinks—and I do too—that sometime, after the danger is over—"

I'm not just certain just what she was going to say, for at that moment the four other synthetic butterflies came out of hiding to join the reunion.

Which reminds me, the thing I dislike most about being a human butterfly is the lack of privacy. These butterfly instincts— I must hide. Some people are coming to look over these ruins.

ALEXEI PANSHIN

SF in Dimension



SF AND ACADEMIA

With the foundation of the Science Fiction Research Association a year ago at the third Secondary Universe Conference, the annual academic science fiction convention, a new era has begun for the sf world. It will be a greater or lesser agony for everyone in fandom. The old comfortable insularity we have enjoyed for forty years and more is gone forever, and no amount of wishing will bring it back. The egg is off the wall—the academics have arrived and they won't be going away again. They've begun to unpack their bags. SFRA has already lined up its own spot on the program at the Noreascon, this year's World Science Fiction Convention in Boston.

There are people who in time are going to see this first SFRA program as a major catastrophe, an important battle lost without the firing of a single defensive shot. I think that to many of us, the academics will seem to have come only to usurp and misconstrue what is not theirs. We have always been hungry enough for approbation to be willing to take our allies where we could find them. But always until now, these allies have either become fans and played by our rules or had the good grace to like us as much as they were able at a distance and go away. Neither of these is going to happen this time. When the fact becomes apparent, a lot of grief is going to come down.

I think SFRA has some inkling of this, if only an inkling. Tom Clareson, the Chairman of SFRA, has asked me to deliver a fifteen-minute paper on a topic of my choice as part of the SFRA Noreascon program. He suggests "dangers of academia or some such."

Well, that wouldn't have occurred to me as a topic to choose if he hadn't suggested it. But I'm starting to think about it.

In some ways, I'm a good person to do it. I have an M.A. and my father was a college professor, so I have a certain wary knowledge of the cloisters. My credentials are academically acceptable and I speak something close enough to academic language for these columns to be entered in scholarly bibliographies. On the other hand, my ties to science fiction in the natural order I made them and in their natural order of importance, are first as a reader, second as a writer, third as a fan, fourth as a critic, and only fifth as an academic. I have my reservations about the gang of people who are going to be sweeping in from far-flung departments in search of the scholar's dream—plausible work. Now that I'm set to thinking about it, I wonder how well science fiction and academia are going to take to each other.

It is clear that the deluge is coming. We are going to be up to our ears in scholar-

ship. Science fiction is a long-neglected area of study with both respectable and admirable antecedents and increasingly obvious present literary and social importance. Academic recognition and study is going to beget even more of the same. Sf is about to become a hot item. Jack Williamson, who in his academic persona is the compiler of a record of the current college courses in science fiction, lists a hunt of sponsoring departments: English, Physics, History, Psychology, Chemistry, Humanities, Communications, Theater and Speech, History of Science, Popular Culture, and Religion. That indicates something of what we can expect.

What else can we expect? We can expect the usual academic mixture of the profound and the ridiculous. We can expect articles, essays, tabulations, monograph series, the republication of unknown classics, much dusting of libraries, and mammoth studies of small questions. We can expect minute examination of our past and our present. Dr. Frederic Wertham will publish his long-awaited sequel to *Seduction of the Innocent* on science fiction fandom and become to psychology what Harry Warner is to sociology. Expect specialized journals. Expect to see statistical analyses of the political conservatism of the Golden Age *Astounding*. Ha! Didn't know about that, did you? Expect argument on the meaning and significance of Robert Moore Williams, David R. Bunch and Stanton Coblentz. Comparative argument. Expect a hundred good papers and nine hundred foolish ones—by Sturgeon's Law.

Still, I think we can learn to live with both academic construal and academic misconstrual. Fans are more likely to be bibliophiles than slans, and we've had our own delvers, brilliant and stupid, right from the beginning. Historians like Sam Moskowitz, indexers like Donald Day and Walt Cole, bibliographers like Donald Tuck, editors, critics and critical publishers. (Advent is now in the process of issuing the monumental third edition of Tuck's *A Handbook of Science Fiction and Fantasy* in three volumes, the manuscript for the first volume of which is 600 single-spaced pages. It impresses me more than any other book on science fiction as a work of genuine scholarship.)

We've lived with our own construal and misconstrual. Fandom has traded its fanzines even-up for Leland Sapiro's desperately academic and desperately fannish *Riverside Quarterly*. If sf can accept Leland's "The Mystic Renaissance: A Survey of F. Orlin Tremaine's *Astounding Stories*," or on another level John Jeremy Pierce's Eschatological Romanticism, or on yet another Stephen E. Pickering: Sociologist—Research Consultant, then it can accept *Extrapolation* as one more fanzine, sometimes plausible ("Three Kansas Utopian Novels of 1890") and sometimes not ("Heinlein's *The Door into Summer* and *Roderick Random*"). Academic serconism is bearable. It falls within sf's established limits of toleration.

But the real fear of science fiction fans is not that academia will get us all wrong. It is that academia will take science fiction away from us—stiff-arming us with the credentials and formalism that we've always been glad to do without—and *then* get everything wrong. I think that what is feared is exclusivity and exclusion.

I think this fear is misplaced. I hope that it is. Yet there is sufficient mandarinism in SFRA to make the fear natural.

As an example, the first SFRA Pilgrim Award for distinguished sf criticism—the unanimous choice of a committee composed of J.O. Bailey, author of *Pilgrims Through Time and Space* after which the award is named, Northrop Frye, Mark Hillegas, Judith Merril, P. Schuyler Miller and R. Dale Mullen—will be presented this

fall at the Secondary Universe Conference in Toronto to Professor Marjorie Nicolson, the author of a small 1948 book entitled *Voyages to the Moon*. The age of the book and its limitations of subject and approach might lend an impression of fastidious specialness.

Voyages to the Moon has no interest in science fiction. In the last paragraph it makes the wan remark, "Our modern pulp and movie and comics writers who deal with the theme have lost the delicacy and the subtlety of humor, conscious and unconscious." That is the sum of Miss Nicolson's references to the Heirs of Gernsback. Her real interest is in the scholarly recollection of old marvelous voyages in all their unconscious humor for the benefit of a forgetful present. The "pseudoscientific fantasies" of H.G. Wells are discussed only in an uncomfortable epilogue on "the moderns."

Miss Nicolson ends her book by saying that although trips to the moon just aren't as much *fun* anymore and although nobody has been writing them the way she likes them in the last hundred years, once there was a place called Camelot: "For although Wonderland may have faded and the Cheshire cat has vanished from before our eyes—a smile remains."

For that matter, *Pilgrims Through Time and Space* itself shows small knowledge of modern science fiction. The book was based on theses entitled *The Scientific Novels of H.G. Wells* and *Scientific Fiction in English 1817-1914*. Dr. Bailey has made glancing acquaintance with E.E. Smith and George O. Smith, but this is as far as his knowledge extends and his interests, like Miss Nicolson's, are all historical.

However, while I don't think it is the stuff of which unanimous awards are made, I can accept SFRA's acknowledgment of *Voyages to the Moon*. There is a real place for the scholarly recollection of old marvelous voyages for the benefit of a forgetful present. We have every reason to find out where we came from and to honor those who can tell us. The science fiction world, our microcosm, has been content to date itself from 1926, and nod to Verne and Wells. But the academics have squirreled away the antecedents of science fiction in their true variety and kept them safe in their libraries all these years until interest arose in them again. They are tracing out the formal and obvious connections between the gothic horror stories, marvelous journeys, and utopian novels of the beginning of the 19th Century, and the technology fiction, interplanetary romances, and dystopias of the early 20th, and showing how these, as much as Gernsback, as much as Verne and Wells, provided the basic stuff out of which science fiction, the modern incarnation of speculative fantasy, has been made.

We need to know these things. We need to know about *The Auroraphone, A Romance; A.D. 2000;* and *Willmoth the Wanderer*, or *The Man from Saturn*—the "Three Kansas Utopian Novels of 1890" of Ben Fuson's study in *Extrapolation*. We need to realize that we did not spring from nothing, that we do have roots. Having realized this, and having charted the fictions of the last two centuries which share the superficial trappings and metaphorical devices of modern science fiction, we will at last be ready to move beyond to the deeper, but less obvious, ties that link science fiction to older speculative fantasies. It is only when we discover what speculative fantasies have historically meant that we will have any appreciation of their potential for healing our modern crisis of spirit. (As Northrop Frye recently wrote to the fanmagazine *Energumen*: "I am interested in all forms of literature that seem to show clear connexions with mythology and twenty years ago science fiction seemed to be about the liveliest and most interesting literary genre from this point

of view. It has not, as far as I can see, really fulfilled its promise, but one has hopes.")

In spite of its distance, then, *Voyages to the Moon* is not a dishonorable choice for an award. I think we would only start drowning in mandarinism if subsequent unanimously chosen Pilgrim Awards went to, shall we say, Roger Lancelyn Green, Mark Hillegas and H. Bruce Franklin.

That is something to be seen. And it is my suspicion that in spite of our worst fears, it won't happen.

Part of the reason is that to a very real extent, *they* are already *us*. That is, many of the new academics who are invading us are old fans who have grown up, gone to school, earned their degrees, and are now doing what they've always wanted to do—earning professional credit for fanac. Tom Clareson, Chairman of SFRA and Editor of *Extrapolation*, is a committeeman from Philcon II, the 1953 Worldcon. Jack Williamson, who was a fan before he was a writer, whose first sf novel appeared in *Science Wonder Stories* in 1929, and whose most recent novel has just been serialized in *Galaxy*, is the author of a Ph.D. thesis on H.G. Wells which is being published by Mirage Press, a fan house, this year. A substantial number of familiar fans and writers are among the founding membership of the Science Fiction Research Association. There is nothing to be afraid of in people like these.

What is more, the academics have shown evident pleasure in making contact with the science fiction community. Willis McNelly, Darko Suvin and Tom Clareson have all been pressed into service to write critical articles for Nebula Award volumes. As I pointed out earlier, the committee that chose SFRA's first Pilgrim Award included Judith Merril and P. Schuyler Miller. And *Extrapolation*'s newly-named Board of Editors—an honorary listing which I assume is intended to serve as an attractive mirror for the magazine's desired audiences to look at—including among its fourteen names Brian Aldiss, James Blish, Samuel R. Delany, Judith Merril, me and Jack Williamson, not to mention Alex Eisenstein and Franz Rottensteiner.

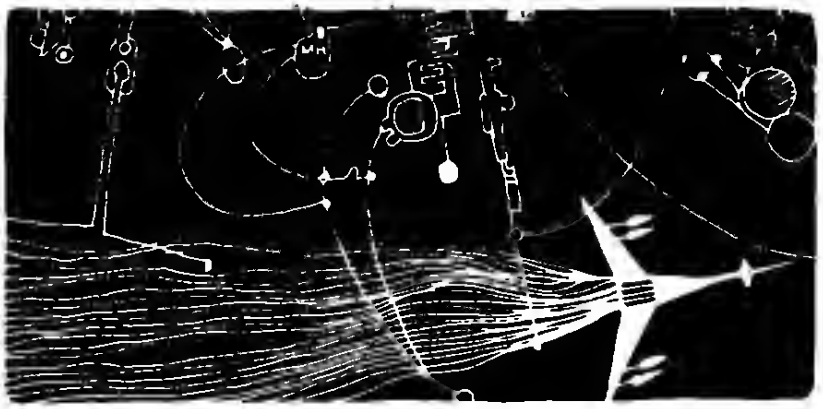
In fact, *Extrapolation respects* Franz Rottensteiner's earnest fanzine *Quarber Merkur*. We have far more to fear from academic bad judgment than from academic bad intentions, and I've already indicated that I think we can live with seriosity. It will probably take some kicking and thrashing around under the sheets, but in time I think we will all be comfortable in bed together.

That leaves just one real danger of academia to be considered, and it isn't a danger, it's a certainty. The fact of presence. Like the added swarms of people who have been attending science fiction conventions in recent years, the academics are here and what was once ours alone is no longer private property. It's very like the days when suddenly half the world was reading Tolkien and you couldn't tell them all that you were there first, that you had read *The Lord of the Rings* when it first came out and you hadn't liked it all that much, that you had been early enough to have *choice*. Ah, but that particular feeling of loss is something that everybody is faced with a dozen times in a lifetime.

I'm reminded of a scene at the airport in San Francisco following the World Science Fiction Convention in 1968. Four fans, two older and two younger, had shared a cab to the airport and as the habit is after a convention they were thrashing out one or another of the great unsettled questions of convention politics. Finally one of the younger fans brought authority into the discussion—he quoted Ted White's opinion on the matter. The oldest fan, a member of First Fandom, which means that science fiction was his own special

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fantasy books



Sam J. Lundwall: SCIENCE FICTION: WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. Ace Books #75440, 1971. 256 pp., with notes, bibliography and index; 95¢.

—reviewed by Ted White—

My first reaction, upon picking up a copy of this book, was to ask the question, *Why?* Why another book about science fiction? Why a book about sf by a Swedish fan barely known in this country? What distinguished *this* book from all those which have gone before it?

The answers to all but the last question will not be found in *Science Fiction: What It's All About.* Nor, indeed, will you discover what sf really *is* all about from this book unless you already had more than an inkling. Sad to say, little or nothing distinguishes Lundwall's book from those which have preceded it.

There are two basic audiences for whom a work *about* sf must be written: the audience which already reads sf and is familiar with at least a part of it; and the audience (immeasurably larger) which is almost completely ignorant of sf. It should be obvious that one's approach in addressing these two dissimilar audiences will not be the same. Yet, over and over again in most of the critical books published about sf (save those, like Knight's *In Search of Wonder*, compiled from essays written within the field and aimed at a presumably knowledgable audience) the two audiences are confused, the approaches mixed, and while in one breath the author overexplains the obvious, in the next he alludes with in-group familiarity to a little-known story or publication. This confusion begins in the author's mind and is a direct product of his unwillingness to decide in which camp his book must sit. Clearly, he wishes to share his insights with those who will appreciate them; just as clearly, if he restricts himself to those few, he won't sell many books.

Lundwall's title proclaims his intent with deceptive clarity: this is, he is saying, a book to give your favorite relative who has never understood your keen interest in "all that space fiction stuff." This is the book which will explain that peculiar cult of writing known to its familiars as "science fiction."

Unfortunately, Lundwall doesn't really know himself "What It's All About." What he does know is where sf came from, and the various literary traditions which sired it. He is also aware to a degree of its blunted impact on the mass media (he correctly pegs *Star Trek* as having "stubbornly held to the standards current in the pulp magazines of the thirties," but seems totally unaware of the better sf movies, *Destination Moon, War of the Worlds, When Worlds Collide, The Day The Earth Stood Still,* even *Forbidden Planet,* made in the fifties), and he holds a number of idiosyncratic views about the field. In the latter category are his repeated

statements that sf doesn't know how to treat women as human beings (he rings in the stories of Anne McCaffrey—of all authors!—twice to make this outdated point), and that Robert Heinlein is a fascist. To support his thesis about Heinlein—whose stories he still admires—he reduces several of that man's most complex works to simplistic synopses which almost entirely miss their points.

Lundwall has no special theory of his own about sf—unlike his admiring editor's own *The Universe Makers*, in which Wollheim postulates a basic dichotomy between Vernian and Wellsian sf, and then proceeds to devote the remainder of his book to classifying every author he can think of into one of these two categories. Lundwall presents instead yet another dreary survey of sf antecedents—back to, *sigh*, Plato—and the standard capsulized history of sf in this century, hitting authors and their works at random, leaping about between such topic-oriented chapters as "Utopia," "The Air-Conditioned Nightmare," "The Magic Unreality," "Out of the Unknown," "Women, Robots and Other Peculiarities," etc., and reviewing in separate chapters the impact of sf on the mass-culture (brief synopses of horror films, comic strips and books, and etc., betraying no orignial insights whatsoever and suffering for his own distance from the American mass-culture on which he is discoursing), the history of the magazines (in a book copyrighted 1971 and "revised and enlarged," he says of our sister magazine, "After many ups and downs, *Amazing* is now little but a shadow of its former self, filling much of its space with reprints from a happier time."), and fandom (he is apparently aware of only the most sf-oriented areas in fandom).

There is, in fact, nothing in this book which any competent sf fan and scholar could not, with comparable research, have written. Worse, because Lundwall is himself still too deeply enmeshed in the forest of sf, he is incapable of really explaining it objectively to an outsider, to whom this book must give a frustratingly formless picture of our field. For some authors he gives brief biographies; others are only intriguingly glimpsed by-lines on out-of-context paragraphs. Yet others (like J. G. Ballard) are alluded to for their most characteristic types of work totally without explanation. No relationships are ever shown between these different authors, the stories they wrote, and their mileau. Jack Williamson's *Legion of Space*, for instance, is politely sneered at as humbug space-opera; his brilliant "With Folded Hands" (the first section of *The Humanoids*) is ignored. Lundwall identifies Harry Harrison's *Bill, The Galactic Hero* as a "comment" on Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, which it may indeed have been, but in remarking on that book as an aspect of the influence of Heinlein's novel he totally overlooks two novels, one by Blish, one by Dickson, actually intended as direct answers to *Starship Troopers*.

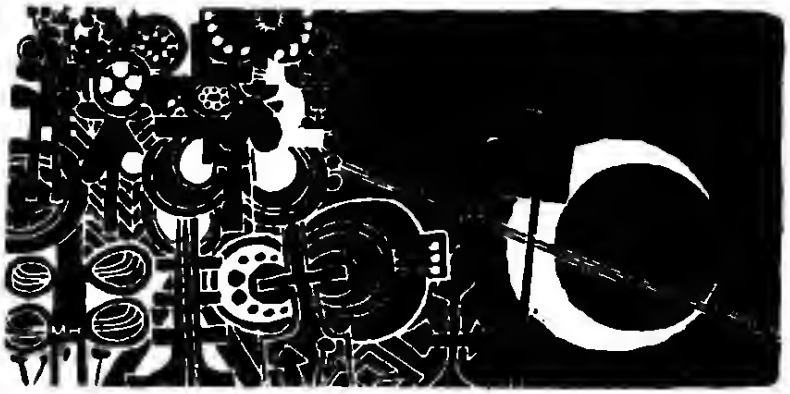
And so on. The trap into which Lundwall has stepped is that in undertaking to explain sf, he has not figured out where to start or where to stop; he says at once too much and too little.

I very much doubt that we needed this book. It may have been of genuine value in Sweden, for which it was originally written, but in this country this approach is already well-mined and Lundwall is in effect only retelling a familiar story, his research exclusively (as nearly as I can tell) second hand.

What we do need are works which devote themselves to critical appraisals, which offer specific viewpoints and pursue them with insight. We need, in point of fact, the book Alexei Panshin wrote four years ago, which remains unpublished to this day—and others like it. Only one—Kingsley Amis' *New Maps of Hell*—has

(Continued on page 124)

... According to You



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet of paper, and addressed to: According To You, *P.O. Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.*

Dear FANTASTIC:

Last year I appealed to readers of a number of magazines, pro and fan, for help in locating, for biographical purposes, unpublished letters by H.P. Lovecraft. Thanks in part to these readers' generous assistance, I am now saturated with HPL material (700+ pp. of photocopies and notes on other letters). I am still, however, trying to run down unpublished letters by Robert E. Howard (other than those in possession of my colleague, Glenn Lord) and Clark Ashton Smith. Any information as to the whereabouts of such letters will be much appreciated.

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP
278 Hothorpe Lane
Villanova, Pa., 19085

Dear Ted:

After reading and locing to AMAZING, I spent most of the rest of the weekend perusing FANTASTIC. Now, it's my insatiable urge to write again. I wonder how I get these compulsions. It never happens that way with any other prozine

I like the new packaging, especially the covers which are much less likely to smudge or rip under a not-so-gentle touch. I know SF collectors who refuse to read certain works if they feel the handling thereof will cause the least damage to the works' packaging. This is an extreme viewpoint, no doubt, but the new packaging *is* more durable and sturdy, and therefore will probably last far longer.

Since I'm one of the readers who is forcing H. P. Lovecraft's books to suffer a revival these days, I much enjoyed de Camp's painstaking regard for detail and historical accuracy with reference to the "eldritch yankee gentleman."

Alexei Panshin, whose intensity for discussing SF in search of "a new paradigm" was impressed upon me at Disclave, is correct that the genre is on the verge of discovering a new audience. I've noticed an invasion of the *LA Free Press* by several columns and interviews dealing directly with SF—Ed Bryant's book reviews, and, surprisingly, the well-known words of Dick Geis, plus interviews with people like Buckminster Fuller and Chesley Bonestell. Thus, the counterculture seems to be adopting some of trappings, at least, of a potential SF readership. This, in and of itself, isn't completely convincing, but an incident that happened to me personally seals the case for me. When I arrived in the DC bus terminal for Disclave I had to make a call. However, all the phone booths were occupied. I had to wait on a woman who seemed to have an interminable number of calls to make. Then I noticed she carried a copy of Bradbury's "Golden Apples of the Sun" along with

her coat, and some other items. Of course, I asked, "Are you an SF fan?"

She just stared blankly at me.

"Are you a Science Fiction Fan?" Ah, as I rephrased my thought she lighted up with the look of enlightenment.

"No."

"But you have Bradbury's book, "Golden Apples of the Sun."

"Yes, a fellow in the bus gave it to me to read."

"Do you dig it?" I asked with a bit of hope, and a desire to see a fan born.

"Yes. Very much."

Well, I would've launched into a long narrative of the history of fandom, of fanzines and of cons, but she departed—rather quickly. Just then, I realized that SF wasn't really a preserve of some arcane and secret organization—as if I ever had, but sometimes I thought that fandom contained most of the people who read SF, or fantasy, and it was fans who decided what books would be bought, what authors would succeed and who really deserves the adulation of thinking people. Not so, but it could be very interesting if the potential fandoms join us in our quest for what is the best in Alexei's "speculative fantasy." People like that woman could be part of it, too.

The stories, as usual, were well done, filled with fresh thought-concepts. I especially enjoyed Bunch's technique of using exclamation marks in "The Joke." It was as if the story was a product of some far future mother's bedtime tale. Or perhaps a government propagandist's glamorization of historic events so that the Average Brain could understand the social system, and not be bored by the rendition. I'm glad Christopher Priest explained where Smearo came from, as it could be from nowhere less far-out.

DAVID WM. HULVEY
Rt. 1, Box 198
Harrisonburg, Va. 22801

Some editors have made a point of reminding their fans that fandom represents only a tiny fraction of those who buy each issue of their magazines—and this is demonstrably true. Even today, with sf fandom growing by leaps and bounds, it would be realistic to say that the upper limit on the number of fans is about two thousand. However, when you consider the number of people who buy sf—either in book or magazine form—against the present population of this country, the readership for science fiction works out to about one person in every thousand. Or, a pretty "secret preserve" after all.... —TW

Dear Ted:

Re your editorial in the August '71 FANTASTIC. I've had *mucho* experience with the printer's trip, and I can sympathize with your headaches. Unfortunately, the pharmacutical companies, I fear, shall never develop an aspirin effective enough to cope with those particular brands of headaches!

I'll have to agree with that Magazine and Book Writing and Production major in one area, though—I don't particularly care for all that continuation business. It's no major hassle, really—not even slightly irritating. It's just a little uncomfortable; one's chain of thought and concentration gets a little broken-up jumping from page 10 to page 110 on a continuation. Discomforting, but shucks! Nothing to be disgusted about. Because of my experiences in the same matters, I have to recognize the problems that enter into editing *anything*, those problems generally being Space and Budget. With little space and a lot less cash, it's unavoidable that problems will arise that readers do not like. But then, most readers are not editors or writers, therefore it is somewhat difficult for them to glean the finer aspects of the editing/publishing game.

I wonder if our Magazine and Book

Writing and Production major has ever ventured into the realm of producing a periodical that operates on a slightly more than break-even profit? I think not. He may also not realize that there are exceptions to almost all rules—especially in the magazine game. It has been my experience in the last two years of college that what one learns in text books and in the class room is at best concerned only with the ideal situations—at least in anything concerned with publishing! One learns the *real* rules of the game when he gets there. (*sigh*) I really don't care if your stories are printed on toilet paper, Ted. Just so long as the quality of their content doesn't slip down the tube.

Moving along:

Once upon a time I had a definite explanation of What Science Fiction Was. Thanks to Alex Panshin, my adolescent dream (notion?) has been irretrievably blown away. I am forced to come to the conclusion that sf is like existentialism: there is no concrete definition. Merely ideas that have a common ground and some basic precepts that are in general agreement on certain points of "order." Does that make sense? I hope so.

I may have lost count, but it seems to me that Alex's last six or seven columns have dealt with this hang up on a definition of terms: "science fiction" *vs* "creative fantasy," or whatnot. Forgive the following cliches, but this embroilment is becoming a dead horse to me. And one can kick a dead horse only so long, as far as I'm concerned. Don't get me wrong, now—I *like* Science Fiction in Dimension. S'one of the best things to happen in the field in a long time, in my view. If Alex feels the label ought to be changed, I've a suggestion: why not start in his own back yard? Instead of calling the column *Science Fiction* in Dimension, why not call it *Creative Fantasy*, or perhaps *Speculative Fantasy*, in dimension? I'm serious. Christ! . . . I'm already convinced that the term "science fiction" does not mean what it useta' mean, but implies something entirely different—something, frankly, much more vibrant and alive. I'd like to see Alex take his column elsewhere for a change—like discuss politics, philosophy, religion, or science and their relation to our genre. It's self-evident that they *do* bear a relationship.

Personally, I *like* the term "science fiction." I have to agree with the point Cy Chauvin made in his letter last issue: *nobody* (or very few) takes the Gernsbackian definition of science fiction as *literal*. The term has evolved, and is now merely *figurative*. And any definition of the genre in the future will, by the very nature now attached to the genre, have to remain amorphous, and "un-clear cut."

GENE VAN TROYER
245 SE 80th, Apt 4
Portland, Oregon, 97215

Beginning this issue, the title of Alexei's column is simply SF in Dimension—*and the "SF" can stand for "science fiction" or "speculative fantasy" according to your prejudices (mine are still with "science fiction"; Panshin's opted for the latter). And, beginning next issue, Alexei's wife, Cory, will share the by-line as well.—TW*

Dear Mr. White,

It's been a little over a year, if I recall correctly, since we were promised to see in future issues ". . . Art Spiegelman, Jay Lynch, Berni Wrightson, Steve Stiles . . . and eventually Vaughn Bode, too." Sometime later, several issues after *Fantastic Illustrated* debuted, you assured us that Mr. Bode was definitely going to show up, both in and on the covers, in FANTASTIC. Swell! Ever since Jay Kinney's "2000 A.D. Man" appeared, I've been faithfully awaiting the *second* appearance of *Fantastic Illustrated.*

Now here's the point of this letter: What happened?

I suppose you could consider me a voracious reader of "underground comix" (and regardless of your circulation figures, it might be worthy to note that they are constantly growing among print runs and sales), and I was, frankly, surprised at your idea of using the same idea of graphics as *Galaxy* tried. I was also delighted. Sure, "2000 A.D. Man" was far from being another *Zap Comix #4* (It's back in print, in case you're interested), but it was good, really good. And ever since I've been waiting anxiously for Jay Lynch, Wrightson, Crumb, et al, but, no dice. As I've seen very little comment on *Fantastic Illustrated* in the letters of late, I get this awful impression that *FI* has gone the way of all worthy additions to broaden the scope of Sci-Fi fandom: Quick and Merciless Death. Unless *FI* reappears soon, I'm afraid I'll have seen the last of FANTASTIC's jump into the underground. It's a shame, Ted . . a real shame. I'm kind of sorry to see it go . . . *sniff*

DAVE DAPKEWICZ
113 Lehigh Ave.
Wind Gap, Pa. 18091

Fantastic Illustrated *was one of the casualties last year when we had to do some belt-tightening, and no one regrets it more than I. We had on hand a beautiful piece by Art Spiegelman (which will probably end up in* Bijou Funnies*), Jeff Jones had one near completion, and other artists were very enthusiastic. However Last issue we used the first of four cover paintings by Larry Todd and Vaughn Bode which we have on hand (originally Vaughn intended to draw four-page* Fantastic Illustrated *stories around the covers), and you'll be seeing the others soon. (In case you're wondering, the Todd-Bode collaborations worked this way: Several years ago Vaughn did up a large bunch of sample covers for one of our competitors, for whom he was then working. These were done actual magazine-size, and included logos, story titles and everything. The actual art was done in Vaughn's line-style, colored in. More than a year ago he showed these sample covers—none of which had been used after all—to me and asked me to pick out four which I liked. I did, and he then turned them over to Larry Todd, who turned them into full paintings. The conception and design is Bode's, but the rendering, detail, etc., is Todd's. It is, I think, a most fruitful collaboration.) —TW*

Ted:

Unlike many of your letter writers, I have grown to like the format of the single column illos. They give the mags a certain kind of visual style and identification . . . similar to the kind of style *F&SF* achieved for years with its standard typefaces and no illos. The current *F&SF* doesn't "feel" right to me . . almost as if I am reading a different magazine.

I looked over *Blackmark* again after reading your review and find I basically agree that Gil Kane has created a juvenile. After buying this book, I found it extremely difficult to start reading it, perhaps because so much of the beginning is ponderous prologue material. Even so, once into it, I felt that Kane *did* succeed in bridging the Graphics Gap between comic books and paperback books which had not been done heretofore. There was none of this nonsense of turning the book sideways. Balance between word and picture seemed exactly right so that one is not turning pages every half-second. (I think the physical act of page-turning is an important element in this kind of book but I've yet to hear anyone mention it.) Reproduction was good. The white space layouts opened things up in an attractive way and made it obvious that Kane had done some care-

ful thinking about working in this format. Still . . . a Marvel *Kull* is a book I'd be more inclined to buy than the next in the *Blackmark* series.

Your dismissal of underground comics is startling, to say the least, in view of your own past attempt to incorporate them into your magazine, the forthcoming *Fritz The Cat* feature film, the request by a national distributor to wholesalers that they ignore underground comics (obviously they felt threatened), distribution alliances with bookstore chains (which also distribute to newsstands), page rates *equal* to that of many establishment publishers, etc. You use the word "amateur," despite the fact that several artists in the field came to it after working professionally and developing a disgust for so-called "professionalism." Perhaps "vanity press" is a term you might have used . . except that Ballantine, Bantam and Viking have all been involved in either reprint or publication of original underground comic material.

Is the coverless mag and book situation now Big Business? In some areas coverless dealers carry mags and comics carefully packaged in plastic bags and pb books hardly a month old! My understanding is that the people behind this operation are *truckdrivers* . . . who just sort of decide to go into business for themselves!

BHOB STEWART
18 Lee St.
Cambridge, Mass., 02139

Sf and comics fans of the fifties will remember Bhob Stewart as the creator of the first comics fanzine, the EC Fan Bulletin, *and an artist of note. . . . You misunderstood me, Bhob; I wasn't dismissing the "underground comix" on artistic grounds, but as part of the commercial publishing spectrum. My own collection runs close to a hundred issues—and must be nearly complete—and my admiration for many of the underground comics artists, as must be evident, is high. But the average print run for one of these titles runs in the low thousands, and "vanity press" is probably the right term. More important, distributorship is much spottier than you indicate (in this area it's mostly non-existent), and very little of what the "establishment" publishers have picked up is representative of the field. (The Bantam book of original work by* EVO-Gothic Blimp Works *regulars was eviscerated and very poor by comparison with the same artists' "underground" work, for example.) Equally important, the underground comics are essentially the counter-culture's equivalent of comics fanzines—and publish, alongside the work of a Crumb or Shelton, the works of barely talented amateurs whose styles and abilities are undeserving of print. The point of my essay-review was the search for an economically viable medium for comic art which is not limited to a juvenile audience. The underground comics may grow into this, but thus far they've shown few signs of it, and I suspect that if they did they'd lose most of what presently makes them exciting for both their contributors and readers. —TW*

Dear Mr. White,

About your August 1971 review of *Blackmark*—I could never be a comic-book reviewer; I've had *Blackmark* five months and had no idea how bad it is. So what follows are general comments rather than defense.

Distribution was tentative, as you know by now if you read *Newfangles*; it was test-marketed in about 20 cities—and flopped (for your reasons or others?).

According to John Benson (*Graphic Story World* #1) the text was by Archie Goodwin and the basic development of Kane's story was by John Jakes. Which disturbs me: if Goodwin and Jakes wrote most of it, why is *Blackmark* only as "by

Gil Kane"?

Your statement about the excess wordage and lack of panel-to-panel continuity illustrates (!) my belief that the paperback is not a good format for graphic stories.

According to the *History of the Comic Strip*, the best newspaper artists—Burne Hogarth, for example—used the full-page dimensions once afforded the comic-strips to achieve unity and design. The number of panels, how these were arranged, and the size of each, contributed at least to the esthetic quality of the sequence and at best to the story as well.

With newspaper strips reduced to ½ or ⅓ a page, the panels mechanically arranged for fitting in the given space, only the comic-book allows whole-page composition; though the size is much smaller, the principle is the same and, again, the better comic-book (or graphic) artists make use of it—or should.

But with the paperback, only one or two panels can be put on each page. All the benefits of whole-page composition are lost.

Also, it's just a little cheating. The average 20-page comic book has a total of 125 panels. At two panels a page, that works out to some 30 pages. With five stories you have—presto! 150 pages of what is actually 100 pages of magazine material.

The alternative is to do what I think Kane-Jakes-Goodwin have done: do a story with illustrations. *Blackmark* is *not* a graphic story; the emphasis isn't on the art, but the writing; there is a picture on each page, illustrating some or all of the action in the text which carries the main burden of continuity. This permits a small number of pictures on each page, yet gets in a lot of material.

This may not be an ideal way of overcoming the limitations of paperbacks. You obviously feel it isn't. The real problem is that graphic-story—and by extension all pictureforms, such as film—and text-story are self-contained forms. Any attempt to combine them must involve compromises. Believe it or not, I think *Mad* has possibly the most fruitful format—but blorst it! No one has thought of trying it out with fantasy, sf, or any other serious stuff.

J. WAYNE SADLER
332 East Adams Street
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

In point of fact, not even all the art, it turns out, was by Kane. Neal Adams did several pages and I'm told that others also did some ghosting. However, the conception and no doubt most of the work was by Kane and I don't quibble with the by-line (although a list of helpers, like the one in his His Name is SAVAGE, *would have been appropriate). If I understand your point correctly, your math is off. A story of 125 panels, if produced with only two panels a page, would run over sixty pages, not 30 pages, as you have it. I believe that underscores your point: in terms of art,* Blackmark *was the equivalent of two twenty-page comic book stories—but with much wordier text, of course. You're quite right about panel design—but of course in a paperback, as in a comic book, if one is designing optimally, one designs for both facing pages—which gives the artist at least a little more leeway in the paperback format. I should add that since I wrote that review, Bantam has released two other books—the aforementioned book by the* EVO-Gothic Blimp Works *gang, and a collection of Bode's* Deadbone *strips from* Cavalier. *Both are larger in page-size—about the size of this magazine—the* Deadbone *bound on the short side, the other conventionally. This seems a more workable format, and rumor has it Bantam intends further releases along this line. Unfortunately, distribution of the first two was worse than that of* Blackmark, *and the cover price—$1.95—seems like a bad mistake. I've also heard that* Blackmark *is to be reissued with a different*

cover; it may be out by the time you read this. —TW

Dear Mr. White,

I have been an SF fan for many years, and *Analog*, *If*, and *Galaxy* have long been staple items of my literary fare. In the past couple of years, however, a number of new magazines have appeared, and I have sampled them from time to time. I picked up your June, '71 issue recently, and I felt it worthy of commentary. The Poul Anderson story was what drew me, of which more in a moment, but I was particularly impressed by your editorial, Panshin's column, and the excellent biographical sketch by de Camp. The short stories and the classic were all right, but "No Exit" was a little too obviously split into a Stine part and a Niven part, while I might suggest that Lupoff read *Bored of the Rings*, by the Harvard Lampoon.

Returning to the Anderson story, I have had the thought for some time that something of the sort he suggests in his story, i.e., "the fragmentation of subcultures and the existence of alternative cultural islands in society" as you phrased it, may well be the future path of our society. My train of thought starts with the Jewish people, who have retained for centuries a feeling of community, of Jewishness, if I may, that has given them a solid basis for interaction with the various communities with which they have come in contact. It was my feeling that if each of the groups so prominent in the news today could unite, to some degree, and achieve some sense of community as have the Jews, without rejecting at the same time all other groups, that we might have the basis for a society wherein any person might find that place where he could become himself most fully, and which would at the same time preserve the variety and interaction that has given America the position of leadership it holds today. The trends of the last few years have given me hope that this is the direction which things are taking, and though my approach was more of an intellectual one, the actual physical grouping and isolation, as used by Anderson in his story, is a logical extension of the communes of today. The problem, of course, is to get the mass of the people to achieve the tolerance of others that will allow us to remain a heterogeneous society.

In conclusion, I think that you have done an excellent job with your magazine, and I look forward to seeing it for many years to come. I might add that my suggestion to Lupoff was not because I did not enjoy his story; it was simply that the sword of satire too easily becomes the broomstick of burlesque, and I prefer satire. Keep up the good work.

DONALD G. LONG
Box 498
K. I. Sawyer AFB, Mich. 49843

Dear Ted:

I had to write and let you know how the constant improvement in AMAZING and FANTASTIC have impressed me. I began reading the two magazines infrequently when you took over. Gradually I found myself buying each issue until I now eagerly await the appearance of the magazines.

Although I hate to be left hanging in the middle of a story, I can see several good points for printing serials. Certainly the serials increase the selling power of both magazines. When one reads the first half of excellent and gripping novels like the recent *Lathe of Heaven*, *The Byworlder*, and *The Second Trip*, one just *has* to buy the next issue. Also, if you tried to fit the complete novel into the mag you would have little room for anything else, and the short stories and features are what distinguish SF magazines from paperbacks. In short, the magazines give something of everything, and do it well.

The smaller type size is a bit harder to read, but the heavier covers are a definite

boon. They feel great to the touch, and so far seem quite durable. I hope the new printer works out. The paper quality is also good.

"The Byworlder" was excellent, and could be a Hugo contender. I believe it is Poul Anderson's best novel since *Brain Wave*. Also, L. Sprague de Camp's series looks like a goodie. I have always been interested in the personal lives of the authors, and Lovecraft is certainly a fascinating character.

Mike Hinge is a fine artist and I would like to see more covers by him. A friend of mine has a large Hinge painting which is excellent and shows just how great his color work can be. Hinge is evidently a perfectionist; he used two coats of paint on this painting.

All in all, the magazines are excellent, and yet somehow manage to improve each issue. Your only problem seems to be distribution, and I hope this can be worked out. Isn't there some way of changing distributors, bringing legal action, or *something*? Someone suggested having the distributors return the left hand corner of the magazine, instead of the cover, which is rather infeasible. But how about returning the whole magazine, or would the postage rates be too large? But this might eliminate black market sales. Perhaps the only solution will eventually be the complete disappearance of SF magazines from the newsstands, and the appearance of such magazines in paperback format, such as *Quark* and *Orbit*. But unlike those two "books," the new magazines would include all the great SF magazine features, like artwork, book reviews, science articles, and the like.

Another suggestion to increase sales: give AMAZING and FANTASTIC as presents. I just subscribed to AMAZING for my father and father-in-law for Father's Day. They both read SF, but don't buy the magazines (probably because they can't find them). It is an original gift (you get tired of giving ties and shirts after a while), and one that lasts the whole year, rather than just one day.

Good luck with the magazines. And I bet AMAZING wins the Hugo this year.

LINDA E. BUSHYAGER
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Two current trends dissuade me a bit from the notion of sf magazines all going paperback: the falling circulation of most non-bestseller (and smaller-imprint) paperbacks as the same distribution problems hit them, and the counter-trend among several paperback publishers towards larger, digest-sized books. In the latter area I include not only the Bantam books mentioned earlier in this column, but the Ballantine war-books series which is now branching out into automobiles and other allied fields, and for which special display racks have been furnished to many newsdealers. We shall see

And that about wraps it up for this issue. I have a couple of last minute notes, however. In our June issue I remarked upon the unhappy publishing (or, rather, *non*-publishing) history of Richard Lupoff's *Sacred Locomotive Flies*, which is based on his "Music in the Air," which appeared in our August, 1970, issue and also includes his "Battered Like a Brass Bippy," from December, 1970. After having been sold to one publisher and then rejected again (when the editor who bought it left), the novel has finally found a home at Beagle Books, whose editor, Don Bensen, is one of the few who Has Faith. It should be out by the time you read this. (Lupoff's alter-ego, Ova Hamlet, will be back next issue with "The Horror South of Red Hook," a story guaranteed to send chills through at least one part of your anatomy. . .)

And last issue, I said that if Lancer Books' schedule allowed, we'd bring you the second half of my novel, *Quest of the Wolf,* tentatively titled "Winged Quest." (The first half, "Wolf Quest," appeared in our April issue.) Unfortunately, Lancer's schedule does *not* allow—the book is to be published this December or about the time our next issue goes on sale. My apologies to those of you who were looking forward to it here—and I hope you'll look for the book.

Speaking of our next issue, the lead novella—complete in that issue—will be Michael Moorcock's "The Sleeping Sorceress," a new Elric story! And, coming up after that, novels by Alexei Panshin and Gordon Eklund—both of which I predict you'll be talking about for many years to come.

Finally, as we were preparing this issue—and just as the November AMAZING was going to press—we learned of John W. Campbell's death. We made a hasty substitution, republishing Sam Moskowitz's article on Campbell's early years as a writer in place of the customary AMAZING Classic, and did a last-minute revision of the cover, but I had no chance to offer my own brief statement.

I did not know John Campbell well—but I felt as though I did. I first met him as an artist, taking my samples to his offices in 1960. I met and talked to him subsequently on a number of occasions, and several times tried to sell him my stories. (He always rejected them with long letters with which I rarely agreed.) I never succeeded in selling him anything I'd done, although in later years I helped Bob Shaw relaunch his writing career by selling to *Analog* his "Light of Other Days" and the stories which followed. Therefore, my appreciation of John Campbell is less the personal one of someone who worked with him than that of a long-time reader and fan who remains convinced that Campbell's *Astounding* of the "Golden Age"—1938 through the mid- or late-forties—did more for science fiction than any other single institution or person. Nearly everything science fiction is today we owe to John Campbell. He, far more than Hugo Gernsback, is the "father" of modern sf.

If I often felt he was less in touch with the realities of the field in the last dozen or so years, if I could not take his forays into Dianetics, the Heironymous Machine, the Dean Drive, dousing rods, et al, as easily, these latter-day events in no way diminished my regard for the man and what he had done. He edited *Astounding/Analog* for thirty-three years, a unique accomplishment in this or any other field. His passing leaves a great empty hole in our field and diminishes it for us all.

—Ted White

(Continued from page 115)

ever been published, and that book only points the way.

In the meantime, this book can be skipped.

—Ted White

(Continued from page 36)

In the manual, they tell you why, listed in simple order, one two three, clear black and white type, no nonsense. They tell you why and Why, and they never once mention wires.

—Gardner R. Dozois

(Continued from page 4)
solely for her own amusement, and Terry was freshly arrived in the city to try making a go of it as a writer. Another writer who was often to be found on the premises was Avram Davidson, who shortly thereafter became the editor of *F&SF*, and subsequently purchased Terry's first half-dozen stories. (Well, I bought Terry Carr's *first* story, for an anthology I was doing for Regency Books, but the book was never published and the story never appeared in professional print either. But I did pay Terry $50.00, making it his first sale. . . .)

As Terry spent more and more of his time writing on one of the spare typewriters in the shop, and less on fanzine-publishing (the prime activity of the shop), a gradual aura of Writing grew over the place. Even in our fanzine writing (for each other's fanzines), we competed with each other for wittiness of style, pungency and pith, often yanking a sheet of paper from the typer to read it aloud to all present, basking in the warm glow of a (sometimes) eager audience.

Only a writer can possibly understand how important it is for a writer to read aloud his latest opus. There is something necessary about it—perhaps a lingering reminder of those days in prehistory when storytelling was an oral tradition. When one reads aloud what one has written, one is made completely aware of awkward phrases, clumsily constructed sentences, and even, most often, the misspellings which tend to slip past a familiar eye. Then too, there is the instant feedback of your audience's reactions and responses. A funny line brings that appreciative laugh—and you *know* it was the funny line, and not some other, unwittingly humorous passage. (Another time, you pass the manuscript to your friend who refuses to be read to, and, after a few minutes, he chuckles. Immediately you react: "Which part is that? What are you reading?" He's vague, almost evasive. *And you don't know. You can't tell.* Such sweet agony!)

Most people don't like to be read aloud to. They say they don't comprehend the story as well. They can't backtrack if something slips past them. They're visually oriented. They want to see words, printed on paper before their eyes, in black and white. These people can be the bane of writers, even though they are the writer's ultimate audience.

Terry Carr and I spent a lot of time reading aloud to each other. No one else wanted to listen, after a while, but we both understood the other's problem. We understood our mutual need.

It was in this period that I began to seriously try writing science fiction. (The first couple chapters of *Android Avenger* were written then, in the fall of 1961, and the next summer Terry and I collaborated on three stories, all of which eventually sold. Those were my beginnings. . . .) Suddenly the shop talk was more meaningful. A couple of years later, a genuine writers' workshop group was formed. It consisted of various local fans, all would-be writers except for Terry and myself. Others included Pete Graham, Bill Meyers, and Leslie Gerber. Meyers went on to write for *Esquire;* Gerber for *American Record Guide.* We met every other week, on Tuesday evenings, and we'd bring stories or fragments of stories to be read and criticised. There was little formality and the critical sessions often became bull-sessions, although no less valuable as such. In 1963 Terry and I collaborated on a book which grew out of that group; a year later, when most of the original participants had dropped out, I revived the group with Dave Van Arnam, Rich Brown and a few others, and Dave and I collaborated on another book in direct consequence. With so few members, the group (which was never given a name) had a fitful existence, but later members were Lee Hoffman (whose

professional writing began in response to my prodding) and Alexei Panshin, and Terry rejoined for a short spell.

But what really did the group in was the fact that nearly all of us saw each other frequently anyway, at Fanoclast meetings (alternate Friday nights), and we tended to congregate and discuss writing at some point during each meeting.

This was, after all, the period during which Alexei Panshin was putting the finishing touches on *Rite of Passage,* Lee and I were writing our first books (and attempting collaborations which always seemed to fall through for other reasons), and Dave Van Arnam was beginning his writing career. We often brought short stories or our latest chapters from the books we were working on to those meetings, passed them around, read choice passages aloud, and fed upon each other's enthusiasm.

In 1968 I was invited to teach a course at the Philadelphia Writer's Conference, and there I saw the other side of the coin. Up til then I had been a young writer among other young writers. We were all writing and we were all selling, and it was an exciting atmosphere in which we congregated.

The Philadelphia Writer's Conference, on the other hand, is for older people—Senior Citizens, most of them—who have always cherished the idea of Writing Literature and never had either the talent or the knowledge to make the attempt. Most of the large, organized so-called Writer's Conferences cater to such people: a few would-be's and a great many never-will-be's whose landmark achievements will be five-dollar sales to obscure church periodicals and small-town weeklies. Most of them are very nice people, but deluded about themselves and their relationship to writing.

The big conferences have a considerable stake in maintaining this delusion—attendance does not come cheaply. Each year they round up their crew of attendees, many of whom travel from conference to conference in one long, resort-to-resort vacation, fans of the conferences and wishing nothing more than to attend them all. The courses and sessions conducted at these conferences are full of pep talk and well-meant nonsense. Never utter a discouraging word; *never* tell an attendee he (or, more likely, she) can't write. Always point out areas of improvement—God knows they're easy enough to spot.

I taught a class in mystery writing. It was supposed to be science fiction, but as it turned out, nobody enrolled for sf; they all wanted mystery writing. I had perhaps two dozen "students." Half a dozen of these submitted stories in advance of the conference; one other submitted one to me while I was there. There was one earnest boy from the west coast, a thirty-ish man who taperecorded every word I said (with my permission), and a great many women, most of whom were white-haired.

Of the stories (one of which was from the boy), only one showed any talent at all. It was written by a little old lady who said she'd sold to the confessions market and seemed to be laboring under no false pretenses about herself at all. She'd aimed her sights no higher than the so-called "gothic" mystery, which was a publishing phenomenon then, and for which she demonstrated as much competance as could be found in most of the published books in that field. I encouraged her.

I didn't precisely tell the others they couldn't write, because when you face a person you cannot easily tear down his thin veil of illusions without feeling impossibly cruel. But I did try to give them an indication of the distance they had yet to go, and, more important, I told the whole class things about the facts of publishing—markets, copyrights, contracts, etc.—about which they were woefully ig-

norant. (The average "teacher" at such conferences knows no more about the realities of publishing than his students.)

I never attended the Milford SF Conference. When I'd first sold a few stories (a qualifying criterion, or so I was told then), I was given to understand that the fact that they were collaborations disqualified me. (That was the year that an old Milfordite and his wife broke up and she was disqualified under that same sudden rule.) Later, when I was eligible, I found the dates conflicted with other events to which I looked forward more eagerly—or I drove up to Milford only for the evening's socializing, for lack of money to do the whole conference. (In point of fact, I always felt less than welcome there; most of the "Milford Mafia" were not of my generation and we had little in common. This may have been somewhat paranoic of me, but the first rejection rankled.)

The orientation of the Milford Conference, as I understand it, was unique among most so-called writers' conferences. For one thing, real writers were in attendance. For another, real criticism of their stories was expected. The idea was that each writer entered a story and it would be discussed by each of the others in turn, without interruption. In some respects this sort of intensive criticism resembles an encounter group.

The Guilford Conference was organized in Baltimore along lines directly inspired by the Milford Conference, but with a more limited attendance and scope. The basic idea was the same: you submit two copies of two stories. A schedule is posted for the order in which stories will be discussed, the discussion sessions taking two days. You spend the previous nights reading the next day's stories, making notes, etc. During the discussion period each attendee speaks in turn on each story, the author getting his say only after the others have finished.

The system is a workable one and can be used by any group of writers or would-be writers, but its success or failure depends entirely upon the people involved.

Let me give you another example of a writer's group I once sat in on:

I was in Chicago over the Christmas period of 1964, for a friend's wedding. During my stay there a rather pretty girl named Barbara, with whom I was spending most of my spare time, invited me to a writer's group which had been organized in quasi-conjunction with the University of Chicago. It was to be a combination of a regular meeting and a Christmas party. The latter was her reason for suggesting we go.

The meeting was held in the large living room of an old house, which was filled with people sitting on folding chairs by the time we arrived. It was chaired by an elderly lady who was very clearly running things. She announced that she had a story by a writer in the group and that she would read it aloud to us all. I gather this was the regular way in which meetings were conducted. She then read the story in a halting, emotionless voice. It was not a very good story, and her reading crippled it. But clearly the writer was her protegeé. When she concluded the reading, she announced that inasmuch as the writer was seling his stories now (where?), he was above criticism—and, in any event, she was sure none of us had any criticisms to offer, did we?

A hand was raised. A thin fellow of medium age suggested a period where a comma had been. She thought that advice well-taken. There was no other criticism. End of meeting. On with the party!

It was probably an exceptional meeting, due to the holiday season—and I felt as a visitor I had no business intruding. But that kind of "criticism" can crop up in any writer's group, and often does.

Every participant has his biases. If too many participants share a similar attitude, the result is a bias which can dominate a session. Worse, if one is aware of this in advance, one may be influenced to write "for" the predominating bias. I've heard this has happened at Milford—the notion of a dominating attitude at Milford is unlikely, considering the diversity of writers who have attended Milford Conferences, but the original concept of a Milford Mafia was born out of the *impression* of some people that certain biases not only dominated Milford but the field as well, as a result of Milford.

At Guilford too, certain biases surfaced. For the most part these reflected each writer's preoccupations—and remained diverse. Yet, it struck me at times that some of the participants were being less than honest with certain stories. One would-be writer, for example, handed in some very bad stories. The problem immediately arose: how can one be honest about these stories without being cruel? Some of us simply couched our criticisms tactfully. Others deliberately said they liked the stories (when in fact they hadn't) and indicated areas in which they needed improvement. The problem however wasn't that the stories needed improvement—they were hopeless. Kindness of this sort is neither honest nor fair to the author of those stories, who, if he is ever to become a working writer needs to understand the basic underpinnings of writing before attempting to scale the more grandiose heights.

In general, though, I thought the Guilford Conference succeeded admirably in its aims, which were deliberately narrow (only a half-dozen attendees) and close-focussed.

All of the short stories in this issue, save Effinger's, come from the Conference. Effinger's had been sold to me weeks earlier; his stories at the conference were unfinished or working drafts. Each of the remaining stories—including my own—benefited from the Conference and incorporate changes suggested there. (I also made some alterations in my "Junk Patrol," in the September AMAZING as a result of suggestions made at the Conference.)

If there is any conclusion I can draw from my experiences with writers' groups and conferences, it is simply this: writers can learn from each other. They don't need elaborate or expensive trappings, just a willingness to get together and deal honestly, if enthusiastically, with their mutual writing problems.

—Ted White

(Continued from page 113)

private property prior to 1938, looked bewildered and said, "Just one thing. I know that I've heard the name, but who is Ted White?" And his friend led him off for a cup of coffee.

Imagine how many times since 1938 that fan has had that feeling of loss to the barbarian hordes. He's lived with it. So can we. Have a cup of coffee and relax.

The new paradigm that I offered in the previous two columns was phrased this way: Speculative fantasy is a fictional form that uses removed worlds, characterized by distance and difference, as the setting for romantic-and-didactic narrative.

This was acceptable for the sake of discussion, but it seems overly cumbersome to me now. After considerable thought and much compression of the original, I have a substitute which means the same but states it more succinctly: Speculative fantasy is fiction which employs a narrative strategy of crucial removal from the mimetic world.

If I can pare it down further than this, I'll let you know.

—Alexei Panshin

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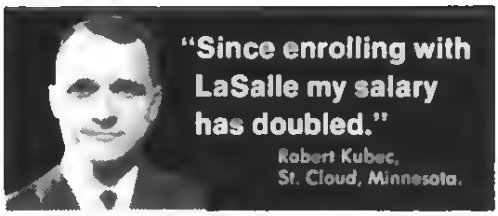
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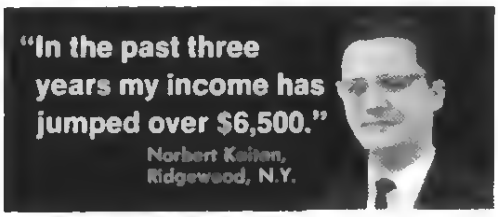
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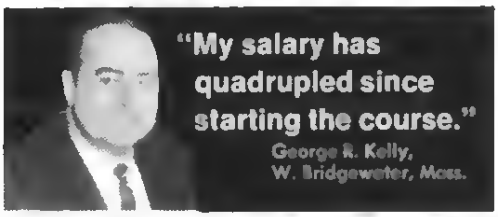
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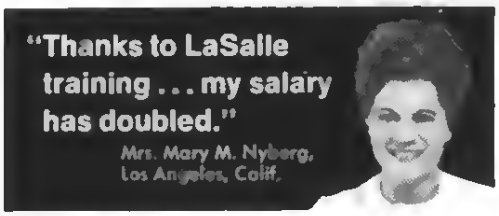
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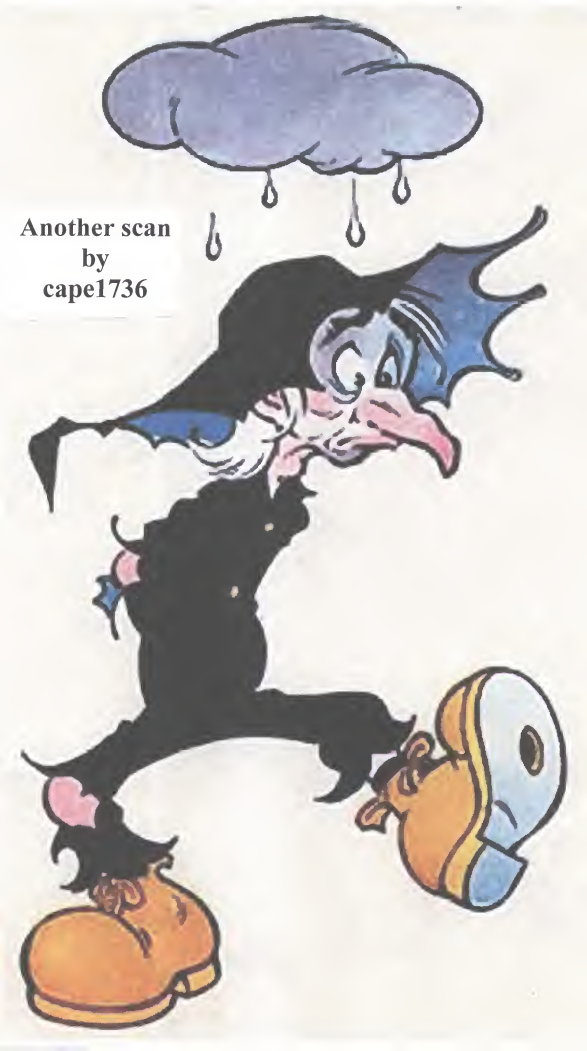






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